



jeevadhara

Vol. XXXVII Rs. 20/-

THE LORD'S PRAYER AND ITS PRESENT CONCERNS

**Edited by
Assisi Saldanha**

PROCESSED

JUL 06 2007

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ISSN 0970 - 1125

No. 218

JEEVADHARA

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alternately in English and Malayalam

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A JOURNAL FOR SOCIO-RELIGIOUS RESEARCH

The Lord's Prayer and Its Present Concerns

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Editorial

First and foremost we thank Dr. Augustine Mulloor who has been editing this section on the Word of God for the past ten years. The Editorial Board is indebted and grateful to him for the great service he rendered to Jeevadhara and we wish him the very best in his life and ministry.

My very first number is on the *Lord's Prayer and Its Present Concerns*. It is such a simple prayer but surely given by Our Lord as a model one. It encapsulates all that we should be asking God on our pilgrimage of life. The prayer is divided into seven sections.

The first relates to its form of address, Our Father who art in heaven, and is written by Dr. George Mlakuzhyil, S.J., who understands the prayer in a multi-religious context and shows how not only we but even people of other faiths can derive great comfort from the Fatherly assurance that even the address itself communicates to us. The first petition on the Holiness of God is written by Dr. Rui de Menezes, S.J. He elaborates on how God alone is holy and why for that reason we cannot profane the name of God and, that whatever holiness we might hope for, it will necessarily be rooted and grounded in the Holiness of God. Dr. George Keerankeri, S.J. takes up the second petition related to the coming of God's Kingdom. He believes that we first need to purify our expressions and terminology which may confuse the true nature of the kingdom. He proposes that we avoid thinking of God's kingdom in reductionist terms. Rather, this petition calls us to recognize God's action and to contribute to the kingdom by living and acting in consistency with it. The third petition, concerning God's will is unique to Matthew. Dr. Assisi Saldanha, C.Ss.R., proposes that it has come to us through the endeavour of a pre-Matthean community that found itself in confrontation with the laxity of Gentile Christians at Antioch, for whom and on whose account Matthew intended this petition as a sure guidepost. That means, in the face of a misguided notion of freedom on the part of these Gentiles, which in practice took away

the commandment, this petition, is meant to reinstate the essence of the love commandment at the very centre of it and will, therefore, remain always a present imperative for the disciples.

So far the address and the three "Thou" petitions.

The first of the "We" petitions, concerning Bread, is taken up by Dr. Lucien Legrand, MEP. He delves into the exegetical and hermeneutical questions concerning the exact meaning of this not-so-simple term, "Bread". For, he finds its meaning has been rendered more difficult on account of the Greek adjective *epiousion* qualifying it. The exegetical options he presents enable us to come to grips with the significance this petition should have for us today. The second of the "We" petitions, concerning forgiveness, is studied by Jacob Theckanath. He presents the plea to God for forgiveness as a paradigm of forgiveness rather than a reason for forgiveness; that is, forgiveness of others presents God with an example of the forgiveness sought from him, not with a meritorious act by which God's forgiveness might be earned. Forgiveness of others demonstrates sincerity in asking forgiveness from God. The final petitions concerning "Temptation" and "Evil/Evil One," dealt with by Dr. Augustine Mulloor, OCD, are an urgent plea to Christians that they make an unequivocal and uncompromising option *against* the false gods, which are being proposed daily as the means to salvation and deliverance, but a sure option *for* authentic religiosity. He discusses this against the background of God as our protector and deliverer from whom we have the guarantee of his providential and protecting care and the hope of a definitive participation in his reign already begun but which awaits eschatological consummation.

It would have been good if this issue could add more pages because this prayer has so much to say to us but it has not been possible because of postal constraints and therefore some articles had to be edited so as to restrict the pages. However, I sincerely hope that what is found within the pages of this number will help one taste the riches of Jesus' own filial relationship with the Father which he has so freely and graciously shared with us. And that should be part of our present concerns as we pray, study, and experience the love of the Father in the prayer Jesus taught us.

Assisi Saldanha

Abba (Papa), Our Father in Heaven (and on Earth)

George Mlakuzhyil

In this article, the author argues that the Lord's Prayer like a mantra taught by a guru to his disciples was considered by the early Church as a sacred and a secret prayer. When Christ gave it he intended it to be a model prayer by which we enter into the essence of the Christian mystery. The wonder of the mystery is laid bare in the opening words, "Our Father". The author probes the significance of such an address against the background of peoples of other faiths who also accept God in such filial terms. But what distinguishes the Christian address from others is that this transcendent God has come to us as Father who enters our lives perceived in a collective and a communitarian way. It means that we are children of God the Father and brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ and therefore sisters and brothers of one another.

Introduction

Today the "Our Father" is a prayer recited by both Christians and many others. But in the early Church it was a prayer reserved only for Christians.¹ It was like a *mantra* (a sacred prayer of a secret nature) revealed by the *guru* (teacher) to the disciples. "Now Jesus Christ, the *guru* par excellence, has also given us his disciples a *Christian mantra* in the prayer 'Abba'."² It contains "in a nutshell the essence of the Christian mystery."³ This may be surprising to

1 "Whereas nowadays the Lord's Prayer is understood as a common property of all people, it was otherwise in the earliest times. As one of the most holy treasures of the church, the Lord's Prayer, together with the Lord's Supper, was reserved for full members, and it was not disclosed to those who stood outside. It was a privilege to be allowed to pray it" (J. Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*, London, 1967, 85).

2 G. Mlakuzhyil, "Abba, the Christian Mantra," *VJTR* 38 (1974) 391. The whole article explains why the Lord's Prayer and particularly the address of God as "Abba" may be regarded as the best *Christian mantra* (391-399).

3 *Ibid.*, 392.

many, since God is referred to as “Father” already in the OT. We are also aware that God was/is regarded as “Father” and/or “Mother” in many other religions. Therefore “what is so unique about the address of God as ‘Abba’..., since we know that the invocation of the deity under the name of ‘father’ is a very *ancient and widespread phenomenon* in religious history?”⁴

1. God as ‘Father’ in Hinduism and Other Ancient Religions

a) God as ‘Father’ in Hinduism

The earliest reference to God as father in the Hindu Scriptures occurs in the Rigveda. Here *Dyaus Pita* (“Father Heaven”) along with the Mother Earth is called *janita* (begetter) of the universe.⁵ Agni (the god of fire) is at times invoked as father of men in the Rigveda: “Be to us of easy approach, even as a father to his son.”⁶

Arjuna acknowledges God as the father of the whole cosmos and prays to him (Lord Krishna) in the Bhagavad-Gita.

Hindus who follow the *bhaktimarga* (the way of devotion) may relate to God as father or mother or lover.⁷

b) God as ‘Father’ in Other Religions

The designation of God as ‘Father’ is found frequently in other ancient religions from primeval times. For example, “the Greeks speak of ‘*Zeus patêr genetôr*’ and the Romans of ‘*Diovis pater genitor*’.”⁸ Thus God was often spoken of as the divine progenitor of the people.

The use of the name father for *God* in the religions of the ancient orient and classical Greece and Rome is always

4 *Ibid.*, 393.

5 Rigveda I.71,5; I.164,33; IV.1,10; V.43,2; VI.51,5. Cf. R. T. H. Griffith, *The Hymns of the Rigveda*, Delhi, 1976).

6 *Ibid.*, I.1,9. See also the Vedic prayer: “O Lord, thou art our father; do thou instruct us like a father” (Yajurveda, 37:20).

7 “It is clear that the Hindu religious tradition knows of God as father (*pita*) although perhaps the more common appellations for God in prayer are *Bhagavan* or *Ishavara* [sic!] or *Parameshavar*. Very frequently the name of Rama is used to address God” (H. Jai Singh, *The Lord’s Prayer*, Delhi, 19856).

8 G. Mlakuzhyil, “Abba, the Christian Mantra,” 394.

based upon mythical ideas of an original act of begetting and the natural, physical descent of all men from God.⁹

2. God as 'Father' in the OT and Palestinian Judaism

a) God as 'Father' in the OT

The people of Israel seem to have come to the consciousness that they are like a son loved and protected by God because of their experience of the Exodus.

Yahweh is Israel's Father and Israel is his son because of a unique, historical saving action of Yahweh on behalf of Israel, namely the Exodus from Egypt. "When Israel was a child I loved him, and I called my son out of Egypt" (Hos 11:1; cf. also Ex 4:22-23; Deut 14:1-2; 32:5-6; ...). Thus Israel is spoken of as Yahweh's son, understood in a *collective* sense, which is based on Yahweh's *election* of Israel.¹⁰

God is regarded as the father of Israel because of God's election of the people as his first-born son through his historical action of liberating them from Egypt. Moses asks the people: "Is he [the Lord] not your father, who created you, who made you and established you?" (Deut 32:6; cf. also Num 11:2; Is 63:16; 64:8; Mal 2:10). "Israel *became* Yahweh's son as a result of Yahweh's call, and not by natural descent. It was bestowal of sonship by adoption."¹¹

The OT texts which present God as "Father" highlight three essential aspects: "a father who gives life, a father who educates, a father who loves."¹² God is considered as "Father" (a) because he is the creator (Deut 32:6; Is 64:8; Mal 1:6; 2:10; Tobit 13:4; Eccl. 13:1.4), (b) because he takes care of his people and governs them with wisdom (especially through the king) (2 Sam 7:14; Is 1:2; Ps 27:10; 68:6; Is

9 O. Hofius, "Father," *The New International Dictionary of the New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown, Exeter, 1975, Vol. I, 616.

10 G. Mlakuzhyil, "Abba, the Christian Mantra," 394.

The vocative "my father" is found only at Jer 3:4, 17, and here significantly not on the lips of an individual, but as a prayer of the chosen people (O. Hofius, *Ibid*, 617-618).

11 H. Jai Singh, *The Lord's Prayer*, 7.

12 J. Carmignac, *Recherches sur "Notre Père"*, Paris, 1969, 56.

63:16; Jer 3:19; Eccl 51:10; Wis 2:16-18; 14:3), and (c) especially because he loves them (particularly those whom he has chosen) (Hos 11:1-3; Jer 31:20; Ps 103:13; Prov 3:12; Mal 3:17).¹³

Nowhere in the OT God is considered as "father" of humankind or of any individual in the biological sense of "begetter." Joachim Jeremias affirms: "There is nothing in the Old Testament comparable to an address like 'O father begetter of gods and men'; a passage such as Ps 2:7 which states that God has 'begotten' an individual, the king, refers to an act of adoption rather than to any physical relationship."¹⁴ The Israelite king was considered to be the adopted (but never divine) son of God who has a personal relationship with God ("I will be his father" 2 Sam 7:14; cf. also Ps 89:26).

b) God as 'Father' in Palestinian Judaism

The first conviction concerning the Fatherhood of God in ancient Palestinian Judaism is "the *obligation to obey God*, and in practice that means adherence to the Torah."¹⁵ And the second certainty is: "God is the *one who helps in time of need*; he is the only helper, when no-one else can help."¹⁶ Thirdly, "although the individual occasionally speaks of God as his heavenly Father..., *there is as yet no evidence in the literature of ancient Palestinian Judaism that 'my Father' is used as a personal address to God.*"¹⁷

3. God as 'Father' in the NT

God is referred to as 'Father' (*patêr*) 187 times in the four Gospels (Mk 5; Lk 17; Mt 45; Jn 120). 'Father' for God is found on the lips of Jesus 174 times (Mk 4; Lk 17; Mt 44; Jn 109). Comparing the occurrences of 'Father' as a title for God in the Synoptic Gospels and John's Gospel, Joachim Jeremias states: "*there was a growing tendency to introduce the title 'Father' for God into the sayings of Jesus.*"¹⁸ Matthew designates God not only as 'Father' much more

13 *Ibid.*, 56.

14 *The Prayers of Jesus*, 12.

15 *Ibid.*, 18.

16 *Ibid.*, 19.

17 *Ibid.*, 29 (*italics in the original*).

18 J. Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*, 30.

frequently than Mark and Luke but also as '(my/your) Father in (the) heavens' (12 times),¹⁹ 'our Father in the heavens' once (6:9) and '(my/your) heavenly Father' (7 times).²⁰ "The New Testament development comes to its logical conclusion in *John*: in the Gospel of John, 'the Father' is the predominant title for God on the lips of Jesus (100 instances, including 9 as an address in prayers)."²¹

a) *'Father' as a title for God in Jesus' sayings*

J. Jeremias has examined all the cases of '*Father*' as a *title for God* in the sayings of Jesus and explained its significance in his authentic sayings under three categories ('*the Father*,' '*your Father*,' and '*my Father*').²²

One of the authentic sayings of Jesus about 'the Father' and 'my Father' is Mt 11:27:

- a: All things have been delivered to me by *my Father*;
- b: and no one knows the s/Son except *the f/Father*,
- c: and no one knows *the f/Father* except the s/Son
- d: and any one to whom the s/Son chooses to reveal h/Him.

The central parallel lines (11:27bc) highlight the mutual knowledge of the father and the son: "Just as only a father really knows his son, so only a son really knows his father."²³ And because only the s/Son has genuine knowledge of his f/Father, the s/Son alone is in a position to reveal the f/Father to others (11:27d).²⁴ And the reason why Jesus,

19 Mt 5:16.45; 6:1; 7:11.21; 10:32.33; 12:50; 16:17; 18:10.14.19. The phrase 'Your Father in the heavens' occurs only once in Mk 11:25. (The expression "the Father from heaven" is found once in Lk 11:13.)

20 Mt 5:48; 6:14.26.32; 15:13; 18:35; 23:9.

21 J. Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*, 32. Cf. also G. Mlakuzhyil, *The Christocentric Literary Structure of the Fourth Gospel*, Analecta Biblica 117, Rome, 1987, 264-267.

22 *Ibid.*, 29-54.

23 *Ibid.*, 50.

24 It is to be noted that the mutual knowledge of the "f/Father" and the "s/Son" (11:27bc) and the revelatory role of the "s/Son" (v, 27d) are to be understood simultaneously at *two levels*, (a) at the generic level: any "father" and "son" and (b) at the special level: God "the Father" and Jesus "the Son" because the latter speaks of God as "*my Father*" (11:27a).

the Son, knows God, the Father, deeply and intimately, is because everything has been revealed to him by his Father (11:27a).²⁵

Jeremias concludes his study of all the authentic '*my Father*' sayings of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels (Mt 11:27 [par. Lk 10:22]; Mt 16:17; Lk 22:29) as follows:

All the '*my Father*' sayings we have discussed deal with the unique revelation and authority which have been given to Jesus...

Jesus bases his authority on that fact that God has revealed himself to him like a father to his son. '*My Father*' is thus a word of revelation...

There is nothing in Rabbinic literature which corresponds to this use of '*my Father*' by Jesus... '*My Father*' on the lips of Jesus expresses a unique relationship with God.²⁶

There are at least five authentic '*your Father*' sayings of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels (Mk 11:25; Mt 5:48 [par. Lk 6:36]; Mt 6:32 [par. Lk 12:30]; Mt 23:9; Lk 12:32). Examining these sayings carefully, Jeremias comes to the conclusion that, although Jesus often spoke of God as Father to people in his parables and metaphors, he spoke of God as '*your Father*' only to his disciples. "'Your Father' is thus one of the characteristic phrases in the *didache* given to the disciples. What content is associated with this phrase? God shows himself to be the Father of the disciples by forgiving them, visiting them with his tenderness and care, and preparing their salvation."²⁷

b) '*Father*' (*Abba*) as an address in the NT

'*Father*' is used not only as a title or designation of God but also as a form of *address to God* both in Jesus' prayer and in primitive Christian prayer.

25 I. H. Marshall comments on the parallel passage Lk 10:22: "V.22 is a declaration by Jesus which speaks of the authority given by the Father to the Son: there is complete mutual knowledge between the Father and Son, so that only the Son can reveal the Father to men" (*The Gospel of Luke*, Exeter, 1978, 431).

26. *Ibid.*, 52-54.

27 *Ibid.*, 43.

Jesus begins his passion in the garden of Gethsemane with the agonizing prayer: "Abba (*abba*), Father (*ho patêr*), all things are possible for thee; remove this cup from me; yet not as I will but as thou wilt" (Mk 14:36). Paul tells the Roman and Galatian Christians that when they cry "Abba! Father!" they are praying as children/sons of God under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, the Spirit of his Son: "When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom 8:15-16). "And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" (Gal 4:6).

'Abba, Father,' a cry preserved both in Aramaic and in Greek, and, according to *Mark* 14:36, already used by Jesus, shows that Primitive Christianity knew and believed that the name Father was its special possession with a special significance. It is a cry not of the man who prays but of the Holy Spirit (*Rom.* 8:15; *Gal.* 4:6), and this very cry shows the complete change which has been achieved in the world among men and peoples by the gospel of Jesus Christ. But precisely because of a believer's verdict like this, the question of the special element in this prayer of Jesus becomes all the more urgent.

Even in the Gospels, we have no other prayer of Jesus which does not have this name Father in the first and often the only place. (*Matth.* 11:25; 26:39,42; *Luke* 23:34; *John* 11:41; 12:27f.; 17:1,5,11,21,24,25)...²⁸

This shows that Jesus always addressed God as 'Abba' ('Father') in all his prayers. This is something radically new, since God was never addressed as 'Abba' either in the OT or in ancient Palestinian Judaism (as we have seen above). Originally "*abba* was the address of the small child to his father."²⁹

Abba was an everyday word, a homely family-word. No Jew would have dared to address God in this manner. Jesus did it always, in all his prayers which are handed down to us, with

28 E. Lohmeyer, *The Lord's Prayer*, 41-42.

29 J. Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*, 96.

one single exception, the cry from the cross; 'My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me!' (Mk 15:34; Matt. 27:46); here the term of address of God was prescribed by the fact that Jesus was quoting Ps. 22:1. Jesus thus spoke with God as child speaks with his father, simply, intimately, securely... The term *abba* is an *ipsissima vox* of Jesus and contains *in nuce* his message and his claim to have been sent from the Father.³⁰

The uniqueness and novelty of 'Abba' as an address to God on the part of Jesus can be properly understood only if we keep in mind that no Jew would have dared to call God 'Abba' because it would have profaned the most holy name of Yahweh! Jeremias remarks: "We do not have a single example of God being addressed as *Abba* in Judaism, but Jesus *always* addressed God in this way in his prayers."³¹ Jesus' use of 'Abba' as an address to God reveals the heart of his filial relationship with God, because it manifests his singular divine sonship, authority and mission (Lk 10:22 par. Mt 11:27).³² He can call God 'Abba' (Papa, Daddy) because he is the divine Son of God, who is ever ready to do the will of the Father (Mk 14:36).

Even though none of the Gospels tells us explicitly about the experience which led Jesus to relate to God as dear father and to address him as *Abba*, it is reasonable to believe that the divine revelation at the time of his baptism ("Thou art my Son, the Beloved; with thee I am well pleased" Mk 1:11) played a significant role. Two of the temptations of Jesus in the wilderness are about his divine Sonship, for the devil tells him: "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread... If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down..." (Mt 4:3,6). He must have gradually grown in his consciousness that God was his own Father who sent him on a mission to reveal him (cf. Mt 11:27 par. Lk 10:22). Finally Jesus surrenders himself to God's will by addressing him "*Abba, Father*" (Mk 14:36) during his agonizing prayer in the garden of Gethsemane (cf. also Lk 23:46: "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!").

30 *Ibid.*, 97.

31 J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, London, 1971, Vol. I, 66.

32 G. Mlakuzhyil, "Abba, the Christian Mantra," 394-395. Cf. also J. Carmignac, *Recherches sur le "Notre Père"*, 63.

If the early Christian communities started addressing God as “*Abba, Father*” (Gal 4:6; Rom 8:15) in prayer, it is because Jesus himself had taught his disciples to do so (as we shall see below).

4. The Lucan and the Matthean Versions of the Lord’s Prayer

Luke and Matthew give two different forms of the Lord’s Prayer which may be *literally* (and *structurally*) *translated* from the Greek text as follows:

Lk 11:2-4:

Mt 6:9-13:

2b *Whenever* you pray, say:

9a *In this way*, then, *you* pray:

2c	<i>Father,</i>	9b	Our <i>Father</i> , the [one] in the heavens,
d	<i>hallowed be Thy Name;</i>	c	<i>hallowed be Thy Name;</i>
e	<i>Thy kingdom come.</i>	10a	<i>Thy kingdom come;</i>
		b	Thy will be done,
		c	as in heaven and/also on earth.
3	<i>Our daily bread</i> give us each day;	11	<i>Our daily bread</i> give us today;
4a	<i>and forgive us our sins,</i>	12a	<i>and forgive us our debts,</i>
b	for we ourselves <i>forgive</i> every one indebted to us;	b	as we also have <i>forgiven</i> our debtors;
c	<i>and do not bring us into temptation.</i>	13a	<i>and do not bring us into temptation,</i>
		b	but rescue us from the evil.

Although there is much in *common* (cf. words and expressions in *italics* in the literal translation given above), there are some significant differences in the two versions. First of all, God is addressed as “*Father*” in the Lucan version (v.2c) but as “our *Father*, the [one] in the heavens” in the Matthean version (v.9b). Secondly, whereas Lk 11:2-4 has only five petitions, Mt 6:9-13 has seven. The two extra petitions in Mt 6:10.13 are: “Thy will be done, as in heaven and/also on earth” (v.10c) and “but rescue us from the evil” (v.13b). Thirdly, in Lk 11:3 we pray for the repeated giving (cf. the present imperative *didou*) of “*our daily bread*” “each day” or “day by day” (*kath’ hēmeran*), whereas in Mt 6:11 we ask for it only for “today” (cf. the aorist verb *dos* and the adverb *sēmeron*). Fourthly, while we pray for

the forgiveness/release of our “sins” in Lk (*tas hamartias*: 11:4a), we pray for the release/forgiveness of our “debts” in Mt (*ta opheilêmata*: 6:12a). Finally, our release of “debtors” in the past (*aphêkamen* in the aorist tense) is mentioned in Mt (6:12b), while our release of “every one indebted to us” in the present (*aphiomen* in the present tense) in Lk (11:4b).

Summarizing the findings of Biblical research on the two versions of the Lord’s Prayer over a century, Jeremias states: “At the time when the gospels of Matthew and of Luke were being composed (about AD 75-85) the Lord’s Prayer was being transmitted in two forms...”³³

5.The Address: “Father” (*Abba*, *Papa*, *Daddy*) (Lk 11:2)

According to Lk 11:2 Jesus teaches the disciples to call God “Father”: “Whenever you pray, say: ‘Father’ (*Pater*)”, just as he himself always used to address God as “*Abba*” in his own prayers (cf. Mk 14:36), even though originally the Aramaic word ‘*abbâ*’ was used by children to address their human father.³⁴ Therefore Jesus’ constant use of ‘*abbâ*’ to address God in prayer indicates his unique, intimate, divine filial relationship with the Father.³⁵ So by asking his disciples to address God as “Father” (*Pater*, which is the Greek equivalent of the Aramaic ‘*abbâ*’), he is inviting them to enter into the loving filial relationship with God whom he endearingly calls *Abba* (which may be translated as “Papa” or “Daddy” in English). In the words of J. Carmignac: “the word ‘Father’ is charged with an extreme theological density: for Christ, it expresses his Trinitarian filiation; for the Christians, it expresses their adoptive filiation.”³⁶

33 *Ibid.*, 86. Again, E. Lohmeyer states that “the Lord’s Prayer was from the beginning received and handed down in two forms” (*The Lord’s Prayer*, translated by J. Bowden, London, 1965, 293).

34 “Jesus constantly addressed God as ‘my Father’ (with the exception of Mark 15:34 par. Matt. 27:46), and...in so doing he used the Aramaic form ‘*abbâ*’ (*The Prayers of Jesus*, 57). “He spoke to God like a child to its father, simply, inwardly, confidently, Jesus’ use of *abba* in addressing God reveals the heart of his relationship with God” (*ibid.*, 62).

35 W. Marchel, *Abba, Père! La prière du Christ et des Chrétiens*, 145; 177. Cf. also J. Carmignac, *Recherches sur le “Notre Père”*, 63-64.

36 J. Carmignac, *Recherches sur le “Notre Père”*, 64.

Jesus had a unique experience of God as a loving Father, out of which flow his own prayer (Lk 10:21-22 = Mt 11:25-27; Mk 14:36 = Mt 26:39 = Lk 22:42; Mk 15:34), the model prayer he taught his disciples as 'their' prayer (Lk 11:2-4 = Mt 6:9-13) and his teaching on prayer (e.g. Mt 6:5-8; Mk 11:25-25; Lk 18:1-8). In the words of George Soares-Prabhu: "what Jesus gives us is a new attitude in prayer, emerging out a new experience of God. All Jesus' prayer, and his teaching on prayer flows [sic!] out of his experience of God as *Abba*."³⁷ Childlike trust is the fundamental attitude that is expected of Jesus' disciples.

The basic attitude which Jesus looks for in his followers at prayer has been imaged by him in the figure of a child. "Truly I say to you," he says solemnly, "whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child, shall not enter it" (Mk 10:15 = Lk 18:17). To receive the Kingdom of God like a child means to accept God's saving love with the openness, the trust, the freedom and the spontaneity with which a child responds to life.³⁸

In fact, this is what Jesus experienced in his filial relationship with God the Father, which he articulated by addressing God as *Abba* in his prayer. And by giving the Lord's Prayer to his disciples he authorizes and empowers them to call God *Abba* with childlike trust: "He gives them a share in his sonship and empowers them, as his disciples, to speak with their heavenly Father in just such a familiar, trusting way as a child would with his father."³⁹

Luke's prayer begins with the address *Pater*. This is the simple form used by Jesus in his own prayers (10:21...) and there is fairly general agreement that it represents Aramaic 'abbâ. If so, we have here the basis for the form of address used in prayer in the early church (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). Jewish prayers

G. Soares-Prabhu, "Speaking to *Abba*," in: *Biblical Spirituality of Liberative Action* (Collected Writings of G. Soares-Prabhu, S.J., ed. by S. Kuthirakkattel, Pune, 2003), Vol. 3, 46.

Ibid., 45.

J. Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*, 63.

referred to God as Father, but the simple form is not attested in Palestinian usage in which God is addressed as 'our' or 'my' Father... *The use of the intimate form was the amazing new thing* that Jesus wished to teach his disciples, initiating them into the *same close relationship with the Father* that he enjoyed, and it is improbable that the early Christian usage can be explained apart from a definite command by Jesus himself.⁴⁰

It is Jesus' own practice of prayer that is the starting point of the Christian practice of prayer. Jesus teaches the disciples, in the pattern prayer that he provides, to pray simply and directly to God as Father... They should pray in confident trust that God as their Father will delight to answer their prayer, just as a human father does the requests of his child.⁴¹

In short, Jesus' teaching the disciples to address God as "Father" (*Abba*, Papa, Daddy) (Lk 11:2) implies that they are "to regard God as Father and themselves as God's children."⁴² We are to relate to God with childlike trust knowing that our loving Father will certainly listen to our prayers.⁴³

Our prayer 'Abba', prompted by the Holy Spirit, the pledge of our eternal inheritance (Eph 1:14), fills us with infinite *hope* and *trust* in the Father. We can pray with unshakable confidence for the full revelation of God's eschatological kingdom in the words of the Lord's Prayer: "Abba, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come" (Lk 11:2). Since God is our loving Father, we can depend upon him for 'our daily bread' (Lk 11:3), for the bread for the morrow, for all our material and spiritual needs and especially for the bread of life of the eschatological banquet.

40 I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 456 (*italics added*).

41 J. Nolland, *Luke*, 607.

42 J. B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT, Michigan, 1997, 441.

43 G. Soares-Prabhu comments on the significance of starting the Lord's Prayer with the invocation of God as *Abba* and its connection to the petitions that follow: The prayer begins by addressing God as *Abba*, and so setting the tone for the familial mood of the 'conversation' which is to follow. The confidence expressed and engendered by this intimate form of address leads smoothly to the five petitions of the prayer ("Speaking to *Abba*," 46).

Since he has allowed his only begotten Son to die on the cross for our sins, we can, though we are sinners, throw ourselves into his loving hands, saying, “Abba, forgive us our sins” (Lk 11:3), knowing that he will surely pardon us, for he knows the weakness and helplessness of his little ones. And when we are about to stumble in temptation, he will lift us up like an affectionate mother watching the unsteady steps of her little child learning to walk. We can be sure that our loving Father will not let us “succumb to temptation” (Lk 11:4), especially the great temptation of apostasy, of falling away from him. Thus we see that ‘Abba’ as an address to God *lights up*, like the current that passes through the filament of an electric bulb, *all the petitions of the Lord’s Prayer*, which is the prayer of the eschatological community.⁴⁴

6. The Address: “Our Father in Heaven” (Mt 6:9)

It is to be noted that, whereas the Lucan Lord’s Prayer starts with the simple invocation “Father” (*Abba*), the Matthean Lord’s Prayer begins with the address “Our Father, the [one] in the heavens” (*Pater hêmôn ho en tois ouranois*) (Mt 6:9b). This is translated as “Our Father *who art* in heaven” (e.g. RSV)⁴⁵ or “Our Father in heaven” (e.g. NRSV)⁴⁶ or “Our heavenly Father.”⁴⁷ What then is the correct translation? The literal rendering gives the impression that there are many heavens. The RSV localizes “Our Father” in heaven as though he dwells only in heaven (and not on earth!),⁴⁸ whereas the NRSV seems to stress the distinction between “Our Father in heaven” and “our father on earth”. Likewise the third translation distinguishes “Our

44 G. Mlakuzhyil, “Abba, the Christian Mantra,” 396-397.

45 This is also the official Catholic liturgical version of the Lord’s Prayer in English! The French translation in *Bible de Jerusalem* is: “Notre Père qui es dans les cieux” (“Our Father who is in the heavens” [in the plural]).

46 This is the translation also in *The New English Bible* and in *The New Jerusalem Bible*.

47 J. B. Philips, *The New Testament in Modern English* (London, 1960). The French Ecumenical Translation of the Bible (TOB) has: “Notre Père céleste” (“Our heavenly Father”).

48 See the inclusion between “heavens” in 6:9b and “heaven” in 11:10c.

heavenly Father” from “our earthly father” without highlighting the localization of God, the Father.

Before one can decide on the right translation of Mt 6:9b, one must examine the various Matthean uses of the noun “heaven” (*ouranos*) and the adjective “heavenly” (*ouranios*).⁴⁹ They occur many more times in Mt (82 times and 7 times respectively) than in the other Gospels.

Most of the time Matthew employs the plural “heavens” (*ouranoi*: 55 times) especially in the typically Matthean expression “the kingdom of heavens” (*hê basileia tou ouranôn*: 23 times) instead of “the kingdom of God” (*hê basileia tou theou*) which is found only twice in Mt (12:28; 21:43).⁵⁰ Similarly “your Father in the heavens” (*ho patêr hymôn ho en tois ouranois*) (5:16,45; 6:1; 7:11; 18:14) and “my Father in the heavens” (*ho patêr mou ho en tois ouranois*) (7:21; 10:32,33; 12:50; 16:17; 18:10,19) are typically Matthean.⁵¹ Matthew’s preference for the plural (*ouranoi*, “heavens”) may be because the Hebrew word for heaven is always used in the plural (*shamayim*) in the Hebrew Bible (e.g. Gen 1:1; 2:1,4; etc.). “In Matthew the plural regularly means the dwelling place of God, but the meaning of the singular is more varied and harder to tie down.”⁵² The Semitic expression “heaven and earth” (*ouranos kai gê*) stands for the whole of the created universe (Mt 5:18; 11:25; 24:35). Sometimes “heaven” refers to the sky (6:26; 8:20; 13:32; 16:2,3; 24:29,30,31; 26:64), sometimes to the dwelling place of God (6:20; 18:18; 22:30; 28:2) and at times to God (21:25). Once in a while “heaven” seems to have two or three of the above meanings (11:23; 14:19; 16:1). The expression “as in heaven and on earth” at 6:10c, which is similar to “in heaven and on earth” at 28:18, distinguishes the dwelling place of God (“heaven”) from that of men (“earth”) but

49 Their occurrences in the four Gospels are as follows: *ouranos*: Mt (82), Mk (18), Lk (34), Jn (18). *ouranios*: Mt (7), Mk (-), Lk (1), Jn (-).

50 *Hê basileia tou theou* occurs 4 times in Mk and 18 times in Lk, whereas *hê basileia tôn ouranôn* is never found in Mk or Lk.

51 “Your Father in the heavens” is found only once in Mk (11:25) and never in Lk. Likewise “my Father in the heavens” never occurs either in Mk or in Lk.

52 J. Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 288.

unites them (“and”) as the common sphere where God’s will is done (6:10) or Christ’s authority is exercised (28:18).

Matthew is the only NT author who uses the adjective “heavenly” (*ouranios*) to qualify God the Father.⁵³ Jesus refers to God as “your heavenly Father” (*ho patêr hymôn ho ouranios*) five times (Mt 5:48; 6:14,26,32; 23:9) and as “my heavenly Father” (*ho patêr mou ho ouranios*) twice (15:13; 18:35). It is clear from the context of the above passages that for Matthew “your heavenly Father” is equivalent to “your Father in the heavens” (*ho patêr hymôn ho en tois ouranois*: compare 5:45 & 5:48; 6:1 & 6:14,26,32), and “my heavenly Father” (15:13;18:35) is synonymous with “my Father in the heavens” (7:21; 10:32,33; 12:50; 16:17; 18:10,19).

From the above discussion of the Matthean use of “heaven/heavens” (*ouranos/ouranoi*) and “heavenly” (*ouranios*) it is clear that the meaning of “our Father, the [one] in the heavens” (*pater hêmôn ho en tois ouranois*) at 6:9b is the same as “our heavenly Father” or “our Father in heaven.” It distinguishes him from our earthly father and highlights the *transcendence* of God our Father.⁵⁴

But it must be noted that, from the structural point of view, Mt 6:9-10 is composed in such a way that “**heavens**” in v.9b forms an inclusion with “**heaven**” in v.10c.⁵⁵ The addition of the phrase “and/also on earth” to the expression “as in heaven” shows that the Father dwells not only in heaven but also on earth. That is to say, both heaven and earth are the dwelling place of God, our Father. It implies that all

53 Luke uses “heavenly” (*ouranios*) only twice, once to refer to the “heavenly host” of angels at the birth of Jesus (Lk 2:13) and once to Paul’s “heavenly vision” at the time of his conversion (Acts 26:19) but never to refer to God himself.

54 J. Nolland explains the address “our Father in heaven” in Mt 6:9 as follows: “In the Matthean flow ‘our Father in heaven’ takes up into the address to God what has already been affirmed about God (see 5:16,45; 6:1). ‘Heaven’ points to God’s transcendence, while ‘Father’ picks up the committed relationship in which God and those praying stand... The language is clearly corporate (‘our’), and the praying is undertaken in conscious identification with and on behalf of a corporate body” (*The Gospel of Matthew*, 286).

55 See the literal/structural translation of Mt 6:9-10 given above.

the three “Thou-petitions” are to be interpreted in the light of both the expressions “Our Father in the **heavens**” and “as in **heaven** and/also on earth.” This insight may be indicated by repeating the phrases at the beginning and end of every petition as follows:

[Our Father in the heavens,] *hallowed be Thy name*, [as in heaven and/also on earth;]

[Our Father in the heavens,] *Thy kingdom come*, [as in heaven and/also on earth;]

[Our Father in the heavens,] *Thy will be done*, as in heaven and/also on earth.

God’s name (“our Father”) would be hallowed/honoured when his will (our Father’s will) would be done as perfectly on earth by men as in heaven. His name would be held holy when our Father’s kingdom would be fully established on earth as in heaven, for which both God our Father and all of us his children here on earth have to work together with him and with one another. In sum, Mt 6:9-10 is *the prayer for the coming of our heavenly Father’s Kingdom on earth* by doing his will and sanctifying his name on earth.⁵⁶

The above-mentioned insight of our heavenly Father dwelling on earth throws light also on the “we-petitions” in Mt 6:11-13. Just as a loving father would certainly hear the cries of his hungry children for food, our heavenly Father on earth would readily provide “daily bread” (basic human needs) for us (6:11), since the heavenly Father gives daily food even to the birds (“Look at the birds of the air/sky/heaven [*ta peteina tou ouranou*]; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not more value than they?” Mt 6:26). Similarly, just as a human father would willingly forgive the human failures of his forgiving children, our generous heavenly Father would indeed “release/forgive our debts/sins, as we also have released/forgiven our debtors” (6:12; cf. also 6:14; 18:23-35). Finally we pray to our heavenly Father, who is savingly

56 J. Nolland comments on the nature of the two parts of the Lord’s Prayer in Mt: “Perhaps in the Matthean context the first half of the prayer in vv.9-10 sets out the framework for and central thrust of all Christian prayer, while vv.11-13 offer an appropriate articulation of prayer for our needs” (*The Gospel of Matthew*, 285).

present in our world of evil, trials and temptations, “not to bring us into temptation/trial, but to rescue us from the evil” (6:13).⁵⁷

7. Significance of *Abba*’s “Father” (Lk 11:2) and “Our Father” (Mt 6:9) for Us Today

Whereas the Lucan form of address “Father” (*Abba*, Papa, Daddy) stresses our *personal, affective*, filial relationship with God the Father, the Matthean form of address “*Our Father*” highlights our *collective, communitarian*, filial relationship with God the Father. It means that we are children of God the Father and brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ and therefore sisters and brothers of one another.

Jesus has manifested the Father to us not only as ‘his’ Father but also as ‘our’ Father, not in a mythological or symbolical sense but in a *real* sense (1 Jn 3:1), for Christ has authorized us to address ‘his’ Father by the same familiar term ‘Abba’ that he himself used. In fact, the purpose of the Father’s sending his Son into the world was precisely to make us sons. And it is by giving us the Spirit of his Sonship, the Spirit that “makes us cry out, ‘Abba, Father!’” (Rom 8:5), that Christ has accomplished our redemption. Hence our Spirit-inspired invocation of God by the familiar term ‘Abba’ is the final proof of our being truly the children of the Father...

It is by means of our *incorporation in Christ* (Gal 3:27), our identification with him (Gal 2:20), our being ‘one’ with him, that we are enabled to appropriate his prayer ‘Abba’ as our own. It is by sharing with us his divine life of the Father that he enables us to speak to the Father as naturally as a child to its natural father. And this we can do only because we have been given the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Sonship: “The proof that you are sons,” says St. Paul, “is that God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts: the Spirit that cries, ‘Abba, Father!’” (Gal 4:6). It is in the power of the Spirit of Sonship that we make bold

57 “After the theocentric focus of vv. 9-10 which create a framed space for the petitions of the second half of the prayer..., the prayers identifies as the basic human needs for which one should pray regularly one’s requirements for sustenance on a daily basis, ongoing forgiveness by God, and God’s gracious control of one’s exposure to all that represents an external threat” (*ibid.*, 293).

to say 'Abba' (Rom 8:15). Hence our invocation of God by the affectionate and familiar term 'Abba' is the greatest *guarantee* of our being possessed by the Holy Spirit, of our being true sons of the Father and real brothers of Jesus Christ.⁵⁸

It is also noteworthy that Jesus taught his disciples to address God as "*our Father*" at the beginning of the Matthean Lord's Prayer (Mt 6:9). It means that every one of the petitions (about the Father's name, kingdom, will, and for bread, forgiveness and protection in temptation and from evil) are made to God as "*our Father*."⁵⁹ We are to look up to God with childlike trust as to a father, and pray for the hallowing/honouring of our Father's name, for the coming of our Father's kingdom/reign, for doing our Father's will readily and willingly; we are to pray to our Father for our daily food and other needs of the day (leaving the future in the hands of our Father); we are to ask our Father to release/forgive us our debts/sins (as we ourselves extend forgiveness to others indebted to us); we are to plead with our Father to prevent us from succumbing to temptation or crumbling under pressure and pray to our Father to free us from the evil. In short, the Matthean "Our Father" (Mt 6:9-13) is *our family prayer* as the children of God, our Father, and *all the petitions* in the Lord's Prayer are to be made to God as *our loving Father*.

Even though originally the Lord's Prayer was given by Jesus to his disciples, how to interpret it and especially the address *Abba* ("Father") and "our Father" in our multi-religious context today? Since many in Hinduism and followers of other religions regard God as "Father" (as we have seen above), can they say the "Our Father" (as it is done in many Christian schools with many non-Christian students today)? Can the *Christian mantra* 'Abba', bequeathed to us by our *guru* Jesus, be given to others like *Khristabhaktas* (of Varanasi) so that they too can meditate on it? Can the *model Christian prayer*, the "Our Father," taught by the Lord Jesus, be prayed by people of other faiths?

58 G. Mlakuzhyil, "Abba, the Christian Mantra," 395-396.

59 In the words of H. Schürmann: "When Christ taught the disciples and ourselves in the opening words of the Our Father to look up to God with childlike confidence as to a Father, he was disclosing his inmost thoughts... As this Prayer unfolds, its every petition must be based upon the same premise, as though it were preceded by the same invocation, 'Father'." (*Praying with Christ*, New York, 1964, 17).

Since God has created all living beings and especially human beings and provides for their needs (“he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” Mt 5:45; cf. also 6:26) and since God has revealed himself as a loving Father not only to Christians but also to others, those who believe in God as Father can affectionately address him as *Abba* and pray the “Our Father” meaningfully, even though they may not immediately understand the Christian mystery hidden in them. Just as Paul preached the Christian God to the Athenians at Areopagus, starting from their own understanding of God as creator of all things and giver of life and yet as “an unknown god,” and relating him to the Greek philosophical understanding of God (‘In him we live and move and have our being’) and to their poets’ presentation of God (‘For we too are his offspring’) (Acts 17:22-28), the Lord’s Prayer (which contains in a nutshell the mystery of God’s unconditional love for the humans)⁶⁰ can be interpreted anew in our multi-religious context. Jesus taught his disciples to call God *Abba* (Papa) (Lk 11:2) and “our Father” (Mt 6:9) because the latter is not only Jesus’ Father but also their Father (cf. Mt 11:27 par. Lk 10:22; cf. also Jn 20:17), which means that they are children of God. The Johannine understanding of the children of God includes all those who welcome the Word of God and thus are born from God (Jn 1:12-13), and so all of them and all the scattered children of God (Jn 11:52)⁶¹ are entitled to address God lovingly as *Abba* and to say the family prayer the “Our Father” and to meditate upon it, as brothers and sisters, and thus discover the mysteries of God and of humans contained in it.⁶²

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60 Cf. A. Haase, *Swimming in the Sun: Discovering the Lord's Prayer with Francis of Assisi and Thomas Merton* (Cincinnati, 1993), especially the presentation of ‘Abba! Father!’ and ‘Our Father’ as the centering prayer enabling us to swim in the unconditional Divine love for the humans (pp. 5-31 and 33-55).

61 Cf. G. Mlakuzhyil, “‘Gathering the Children of God into One’; Johannine View of Universalism,” *Jeevadhara* 30 (2000), 190-215.

62 Any one (whether Christian or not) who meditates on *Abba* and the “Our Father” with an open heart, will gradually discover the precious treasures of the Divine-human mysteries.

The Holiness of God: The Ground of Our Holiness

Rui de Menezes

The author first touches upon the holiness of God in the Old Testament, where the revelation of God's name as YHWH is a gratuitous gift to Israel. No one has a right to know it nor can any one demand it! God of his own will has become immanent in our midst. And the first petition in the Lord's Prayer teaches us to take care so as not to profane God's holy name, which does happen at least in three spheres of life, that of the cultic, moral and on the plane of history. Of course, the eschatological nature of this petition makes clear that in the Messianic times God's name will be finally sanctified and vindicated, but in the meanwhile we must uphold the holiness of his name for which God prepares us by communicating his holiness to us through the Spirit.

1. Introduction

The characteristic Christian prayer, *The Our Father*, taught us by Jesus himself has been handed down to us in the New Testament in two forms, the longer one in Mt 6:9b-13, with seven petitions, and the shorter one in Lk 11:2-4, with five petitions.¹ It is to be noted that the *Didache*, which enjoins that Christians should recite this prayer three times a day, also provides us with the version of the Our Father which is closer to that of Matthew.² The Lucan version as a whole has the ring of originality while in some of the details Matthew seems

1 W. Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, THKNT, Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, ³1972, 197. The copyists of the New Testament have very often assimilated the text of Luke to that of Matthew. But the shorter version seems to be original.

2 See *Didache* 8:2f. The Greek text can be conveniently found in K. Aland's *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum*, Württembergische Bibelanstalt Stuttgart, ⁴1967, 87.

to have preserved a few original traits.³ All the same Luke gives us Jesus' original address to God merely as *pater* or 'Father!' (in the vocative case) which corresponds to the original Aramaic 'abba' (Mk 14:36; Gal 4:6; Rom 8:15).⁴

As Walter Grundmann maintains, the Our Father is deliberately placed right in the center of the Sermon of the Mount of his Gospel (Mt 5:1-7:28). This Sermon is an artificial composition of the evangelist, and is meant to be an interpretation (*Auslegung*) of the Our Father, which in the words of Tertullian, as Grundmann informs us, is itself a "*breviarium totius evangelii*", or a summary of the whole Gospel.⁵ Luke on the other hand gives us the situation and the setting of the Our Father as a response of Jesus to the disciples who request him to teach them how to pray (Lk 11:1). And as Alfred Plummer says it would be difficult to imagine that Luke would have invented the incident.⁶

Our paper will deal exclusively with the first petition, 'Hallowed be thy Name!' But it must not be forgotten that out of the seven petitions in Matthew, the first three are eschatological⁷ and belong together⁸. They pray for the establishment of God's kingdom on earth. And this is indeed the will of God. That is the reason why possibly Luke omits the third petition, "Your will be done!" (Mt 6:10).⁹

1. Holiness of God

2. Name of God and God

According to the Semitic mentality the name of a person is a

3 Cf. E. Schweizer, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, NTD 2, Göttingen, 1973, 93. Cf. also W. Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 199.

4 It is interesting to note that only Luke (who along with the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews presents the best Greek of the New Testament), has the correct Greek vocative *pater*.

5 Cf. his *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 206. This is found in Exkursus 6, "The Our Father and the theological significance of the Sermon on the Mount", especially 206.

6 Cf. his *Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Luke*, 293.

7 See W. C. Allen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Matthew*, ICC, Edinburgh, 1907, 58.

8 See J. Schniewind, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, NTD, Göttingen, 81.

9 Note that all quotations of the Bible follow the NRSV unless otherwise stated.

revelation of the person. And so the English sayings, 'What's in a name?' or "A rose would smell as sweet under any other name", amount to pure nominalism and would sound meaningless to the ears of a Semite. For the Semites the name is the person and the person is the name. Thus we read in the Book of Exodus, "I am going to send an angel in front of you, to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. Be attentive to him and listen to his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression, *for my name is in him*" (Exod 23:20-21; stress added). There is here an implicit identification of the angel with YHWH himself, for in the Old Testament only God forgives sins.¹⁰ The name of God is in him! So listening to the angel is listening to God. And in fact the next verse makes this evident. It reads: "But if you listen attentively to *his voice* and do *all that I say*, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and a foe to your foes" (Exod 23:22; stress added). Similarly the wife of Nabal during her encounter with David, says of her husband: "My lord, do not take seriously this ill-natured fellow, Nabal; for as his name, so is he; Nabal (*nābāl*) is his name, and folly (*nēbālâ*) is with him" (1 Sam 25:25).¹¹ Similarly Esau says of his brother Jacob, in Hebrew *ya'āqōb*, which was popularly interpreted as 'supplanter' or 'crook': "Is he not rightly named Jacob *ya'āqōb*, (i.e., supplanter)? For he has supplanted (*āqab*) me these two times. He took away my birthright; and look, now he has taken away your blessing" (Gen 27:36). There is no need to multiply examples. All this goes to prove that the name is a revelation of the person.

Now, the revelation of God's name as YHWH is a gratuitous gift to Israel. No one has a right to know it nor can any one demand it! Thus God refuses to divulge his name to Samson's parents (cf. Judg 13:17-18). Not even the patriarchs received this favour. It was reserved for Israel. We quote the Priestly Author: "God (*ʾĒlōhîm*) also spoke to Moses and said to him: I am the LORD (in Hebrew *YHWH*). I

10 It is to be noted that in the Hebrew Bible the verbs *sāla* (forgive sins) and *bāra'* (create) have only God as their subject and never a human agent.

11 The Hebrew word *nābāl* means 'fool', and *nēbālâ* means 'folly'. The Hebrew runs: *nābāl š'mō unēbālâ 'immō* (1 Sam 25:25).

appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty ('*Ēl šadday*), but by my name 'The LORD (in Hebrew *YHWH*) I did not make myself known to them" (Exod 6:2-3). And the final revelation of God's name as 'Father' will be made by Jesus. In John's Gospel Jesus says: "I have made known your name to those whom you gave me from the world" (Jn 17:6). The Gnostics have stressed the transcendence of the New Testament God as Father to a very high degree.¹²

When we come to the theology of the Deuteronomist we see that he introduces what von Rad calls '*Schem-Theologie*' or 'Name theology'¹³ to show the transcendence of God. For the Deuteronomist *YHWH*, the God of Israel, does not dwell, in fact cannot dwell in a house made by human hands, for the highest heaven itself cannot contain him (cf. 1 Kg 8:27). And so it is for his name that God finds a home in the central sanctuary (cf. Deut 12 and *passim*).

And so we conclude this section by stating that to know God's name is to know God himself (Ps 9:11), to love God's name is to love God himself (Ps 5:12), to sing the praises of God's name is to sing his praises (Ps 9:2b), to thank his holy name is to thank him (Ps 106:47), the exaltation of God's name is the exaltation of God (Isa 57:15), to profane or desecrate his name is to desecrate God himself (Lev 18:21), to despise the name of God is to despise God (Isa 52:5), and finally, to hallow or sanctify his name is to declare God holy (Isa 29:23). We shall treat of this last in the following section for it corresponds to the first petition in the Matthaean version of the Our Father.

3. Hallowing of God's Name

In order to understand better the context of the first petition we shall give the two versions of the Our Father in separate columns. We shall give our own literal translation.

12 Cf. the author's "Gnosticism and Nag Hammadi Literature", *ITS* 43 (2006) 274.

13 Cf. G. von Rad, *Deuteronomium – Studien*, ch. 3, "Die deuteronomische Schem-Theologie und die priesterliche Kabod-Theologie," Göttingen, 1947, reprinted in his *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament II*, Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1973, 109-153.

We have given the eschatological petitions in ordinary print, while the individual petitions have been put in italics.

Matthaean Version	Lucan Version
Our Father who (art) in the heavens, Hallowed be thy name May thy kingship come May thy will be done as in heaven so on earth. <i>Our bread for the morrow give us today</i> <i>And forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors.</i> <i>And do not bring us to the test</i> <i>But save us from the evil (one?)</i>	Father, Hallowed be thy name. May thy kingship come. <hr/> <i>Our bread for the morrow keep on giving us day by day</i> <i>And forgive us our sins</i> <i>For we ourselves forgive every one who is in debt to us</i> <i>And do not bring us to the test.</i> <hr/>

As we have already mentioned above, *the first three petitions* in the Matthaean version belong together. They are eschatological in scope and content, and are focused on the Messiah who ushers in the kingship of God. The will of God is to put an end to the kingship of Satan, that is, the kingship or dominion of sin in this world. Thereby the holiness of God's name will be maintained and displayed by God. And this is done by God himself, not by us weak human beings. *The next four petitions* are focused on the individual followers of Jesus, who need daily food, who have to forgive one another's sins, who need God's protection in times of trial and test, and who need to be saved from the clutches of the Evil One, who is Sin personified (cf. Rom 6:14; cf. also 5:12).

Jesus as we know from Mark's Gospel has ushered in the kingship of God (cf. Mk 1:14-15). Matthew too tells us that Jesus proclaimed *to euangelion tēs basileias*, or the Good News of the kingship, that is, of God (Mt 4:23; 9:35). In other words the kingship of Satan has

been declared as having come to an end. This is perhaps why Luke logically omits the seventh petition about the deliverance from the Evil One. In Mark's apocalyptic language, Jesus, the Stronger One, has vanquished and bound the Strong One, that is, Satan (cf. Mk 3:20-29, specially v. 27).

4. Biblical Idea of Holiness

Right at the outset it must be acknowledged that that the German scholar Rudolf Otto has made a valid and lasting contribution to our understanding of the concept of 'holy' with his book, *The Idea of the Holy*.¹⁴ For the present study it is sufficient to refer to chs. 4-6 (on *mysterium tremendum*), as well as chs. 10-11 on the Numinous in the Old and the New Testament respectively. He has opened our eyes to the fact that the idea of 'the holy' is primarily ontological and not ethical. In his own words, "if the ethical element was present at all, at any rate it was not original and never constituted the whole meaning of the word".¹⁵ According to him the idea of holy is primarily attributed to the divine Numen and only secondarily to human beings, places, times or objects. As he puts it, "when once it has been grasped that *qādôš* or *sanctus* is not originally a *moral* category at all, the most obvious rendering of the words is 'transcendent' ('supramundane', *überweltlich*)".¹⁶

Human beings or objects are not by themselves holy, but are rendered holy by God so that they can have intercourse with the Divine. As Rudolf Otto would say, "the 'profane' creature cannot forthwith approach the numen, but has need of a covering or shield against the *orgê* of the numen. Such a 'covering' is then a 'consecration', i.e., a procedure that renders the approacher himself 'numinous', frees him from his 'profane' being and fits him for intercourse with the numen".¹⁷

14 R. Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, Oxford University Press, London, 1957. It is to be noted that the first edition of 1923 ran into ten impressions! The subtitle of the book runs: 'An Inquiry into the non-rational factor in *the idea of the divine* and its relation to the rational' (stress added).

15 *Ibid.*, 6.

16 *Ibid.*, 52.

17 *Ibid.*, 54.

Against this backdrop we can now approach the Old Testament. It is very revealing to realize that the word 'holy' is relatively rare in the pre-exilic literature. Possibly the most important text is from the Book of Samuel, where the people of Beth-shemesh are reported as saying: "Who is able to stand before the LORD (i.e., YHWH), this holy God (*hā' ʾēlōhîm haqqāḏôsh hazzeh*)? To whom shall he go so that we may be rid of him?" (1 Sam 6:20). The inhabitants of Beth-shemesh are reacting because YHWH had struck dead seventy of the descendants of Jeconiah who did not join in the festivities of the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh when the ark had come back from the Philistine territory. Other important pre-exilic texts are from the Book of Exodus where Moses at the Burning Bush is asked to remove his shoes for the ground where he is standing is holy. Moses is afraid to look at God, the implication being that He is holy (Ex 3:5).¹⁸

But the theme of holiness is expressly and extensively treated in the post-exilic literature, even though it is the pre-exilic First Isaiah who was the first to call YHWH, *qāḏôš yiśrā' ʾēl* 'the Holy One of Israel' (cf. Isa 1:4; 5:19, 24; 10:20; 12:6; 17:7; 29:23; 30:11-12, 15). In this he was followed by his disciple, the post-exilic Second Isaiah (cf. Isa 41:14-16; 43:3, 14; 47:4; 48:17; cf. 49:7; 49:7; 54:5). But it must not be forgotten that already before First Isaiah, the prophet Hosea had already contrasted the transcendent holiness of God with the fickleness of human beings, the permanence of God with the transience of humans. We quote: "For I am God ('ēl) and not mortal, the Holy One (*qāḏôš*) in your midst. We have here practically an identification of 'God' and 'holy'.

Finally all of us are familiar how God had declared the whole Mount Sinai holy. That is, out of bounds for priests and lay people alike! (cf. Exod 19: 9-25; specially vv. 23-25). It is of course difficult to say how much of this is later Priestly retrojection. At any rate the Piel (factitive, vv. 14 and 23) and Hithpael (reflexive, v. 22) forms of the root *qdš* appear in the Hebrew text. At any rate the whole chapter is charged with a sense of the numinous, and the corresponding reaction of fear.

18 The Hebrew has: *kî hammāqôm 'ăšer 'attā 'ômēd 'ālāw 'admat qāḏeš hû'* (Exod 3:5).

a) *Significance of God's holiness*

Now the question before us is, so to say, 'What are the various ingredients of God's holiness?' In other words, 'what did the Israelites of old understand when they said YHWH or God's name is holy?' This can be understood first of all from the synonyms that appear alongside the verb *qādôš* or 'holy'.

i. *Holiness as kingly exaltedness*

Psalm 99 is very instructive in this regard. We quote it from the NRSV, only that we have substituted YHWH for its 'The LORD':

v. 1 YHWH is king; let the peoples tremble!

He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake!

v. 2 YHWH is great in Zion;

He is exalted over all the peoples.

v. 3 Let them praise your great and awesome name.

Holy is he!

ii. *Holiness as glory and majesty*

Other synonyms that appear elsewhere are '*addîr* (majestic) and *nô'ār* (glorious) which are found alongside *nôrā'* (cf. Ps 76:4, 7, 11-12). YHWH's deeds cause both consternation and fascination at the same time! Rudolf Otto brings to our attention the Greek verb *thambein*, which is found in the Gospel of Mark to show the spectators' reaction to the numinous element in the Christ-event (cf. Mk 1:27; 10:32; 16:6). Besides these citations of the verb we would like to focus on the noun *thambos* which appears in the Gospel of Luke as a reaction to the spectators of the wonders of the Messianic times (cf. Lk 4:36; 5:9; Act 3:10).¹⁹

As a result of this greatness, which actually means power and transcendence of YHWH, the peoples tremble (*rāgaz*) and the earth quakes (*nût*)! (Ps 99:1). This is beautifully described in another Psalm

¹⁹ R. Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1957, see ch. 5: The Analysis of 'Mysterium,' 26, footnote 1. The Vulgate renders *thambein* as *expavescere* (to be exceedingly terrified) in Mk 16:6, as *mirari* (to wonder, to be astonished) in Mk 1:27, and as *stupeo* (to be stunned, amazed) in Mk 10:32.

which is one of the oldest in the Hebrew Bible²⁰. This is the Song of Moses. The reaction of the nations to the powerful intervention of YHWH in the Exodus causes the peoples to tremble (*rāgaz*), it produces pangs (*hîl*) in Philistia, dismay (*nibhālû*) in Edom, trembling (*ra'ad*) in Moab. All the rulers or inhabitants of Canaan melt away (*nāmôgû*). Terror (*'êmâ*)²¹ and dread (*pāhād*) fall upon them all (cf. Exod 15:14-16).

iii. Holiness as uniqueness

As a result of this the Israelites arrived at the idea of the uniqueness of YHWH. This is expressed both in the form of a question but sometimes also appears as a statement. Questions implying this uniqueness of YHWH are plentiful in the Hebrew Bible. The Song of Moses has: "Who is like you, O LORD (YHWH) among the gods (*'ēlîm*)?²² Who is like you, majestic in holiness (*ne'ēdār baqqōdeš*), awesome in splendor (*nôrā' r'hîlôt*), doing wonders (*'ōseh pele*)?" (Exod 15:11). One Psalm asks: "Who is like the LORD (YHWH) our God, who is seated on high, who looks down on the heavens and the earth?" (Ps 113:5). And another Psalm after stating that the way of Israel's God is holy goes on to ask: "What God is so great as our God?" (Ps 77:13). And finally the same thing is said in the form of a positive statement in the Book of Samuel: "There is no Holy One (*'ēn qādōš*) like the LORD (YHWH), no one beside you. There is no Rock like our God" (1 Sam 2:2). And again: "There is none like you among the gods (*'ēn kāmōkā bā'ēlōhîm 'ādōnay*), O LORD (YHWH), nor are there any works (*ma'āšîm*) like yours!" (Ps 86:8).

20 The Song of Moses (Exod 15:1-18) and the Song of Deborah (Jdg 5:1-31) are the oldest pieces of literature in the Hebrew Bible going back to the twelfth or eleventh century, the time of the Settlement. The Hebrew of both is pretty archaic.

21 Following the critical apparatus we have put *'êmâ* instead of *'ēmâtâ* of the text.

22 The Hebrew word *'ēlîm* is used only for the false gods and never for YHWH, the God of Israel. For the latter the Biblical authors use either *'ēlōhîm* the plural of majesty (see Gen ch 1:1-2:4a) or simply *'ēl*, or its poetic form *'ēlōah* (especially in Job and some Psalms) which is similar to Allah.

iv. *Holiness as including both transcendence and immanence*

What is important to stress is the fact that the Biblical authors confess and profess not only God's transcendence but also his immanence. In other words this God who in fact is so exalted above the heavens also stoops down and takes care of the widow and the orphan, as Psalm 113 so beautifully portrays. The first part of the Psalm (vv. 1-4) stresses his transcendence and the second (vv. 6-9) his immanent activity in this world. And right in the middle of the Psalm (v. 5), the question concerning his uniqueness is placed.

5. Profanation of God's Name

In order to understand better the first petition of the Our Father concerning the sanctification of God's name it is very instructive to understand what the Hebrew Bible understands by the profanation of his name. The Biblical authors who throw light on this subject are mainly the Book of Leviticus, in particular the Holiness Code (Lev 17-26) and the Book of Ezekiel²³. We shall see that according to the Bible the name of God can be profaned in three spheres.

a) Profanation in the cultic sphere

The first aspect of profanation of God's name takes place in the cultic activity of Israel in particular that of her priests. Three Hebrew verbs are used in this context. The first one and the most common is *ḥallēl*, to profane, that is, to treat as profane. The second one is *ṭimmē'* to defile, that is, to treat as impure. And the third is *ni'ēs* to despise, sometimes rendered as to revile. All the three forms appear in the Piel, that, factitive or declarative form of the Hebrew verb. In fact one of the main duties of the priests is to teach the lay people the distinction between the holy (*qādôš*) and the profane (*hōl*), between the clean (*ṭāhōr*) and the unclean (*ṭāmē'*). Aaron and the priests are to distinguish (*habdīl*, literally to separate) between the holy (*qōdeš*) and the common or profane (*hōl*), and between the unclean (*ṭāmē'*) and the clean (*ṭāhōr*) and to teach this to the Israelites (cf. Lev

23 This is treated in the so-called Torah of Ezekiel (Ezek 40-44). This contains the blueprint for the restoration of the Temple and the liturgy of the post-exilic Temple. It is not absolutely sure which of the two, the Holiness Code or the Torah of Ezekiel is earlier.

10:10-11; see also Ezek 44:23). It is in this context that we have to see why YHWH killed Nadab and Abihu, the priestly sons of Aaron, for having offered 'unholy' or unlawful fire, 'ē šzārâ (cf. Lev 10:1-3). YHWH himself offers an explanation for this. "Through those who are near me (that is, his priests) I will show myself holy, and before all the people I will be glorified (Lev 10:3b). The priests are supposed to teach the people to give God due respect. Time and again the Holiness Code insists that the Israelites must not profane the name of God (cf. Lev 18:21; 20:3; 22:2 and 22:32).

b) Profanation in the moral sphere

We can now pass on to the other understanding of the profanation of God's name. Here the sphere of profanation is extended to the moral sphere. There is no talk here of rite and ritual but of human relationships. Very important is one of the earliest texts that we have on this theme. This is to be found in the Book of the prophet Amos. When the poor and the marginalised²⁴ are oppressed, and the dignity of the woman is trampled through sexual exploitation of the same girl (*na'ārâ*) by both father and son, then it is that the holy name of YHWH is profaned (Am 2:6-7). During the reign of king Zedekiah the prophet Jeremiah takes the Judahites to task for having brought back the 'Hebrew slaves' once again into subjection after granting them 'release' (*dêrôr*), as a result of the covenant renewal ceremony. This transgression of the covenant he considers as a profanation of God's name (cf. Jer 34:8-22, especially v. 16). Similarly the Holiness Code also stresses the fact that God's name is profaned when one steals, robs or deals fraudulently with one's neighbour, or swears falsely in His name (cf. Lev 18:11-12)

c) Profanation in the sphere of history

We pass on to another aspect of the profanation of God's name. We are not concerned here with what is normally understood as blasphemy that is, cursing God (*qallēl*). For this the Hebrew has used *nāqab*, a totally different word from the usual *hallēl* (cf. Lev

24 In this passage of Amos four synonyms for the poor appear: *šaddîq*, *'ebyôn*, *dal* and *'ānāw*! Amos champions the cause of the poor like no other prophet.

24:11).²⁵ Probably this is the origin of the phrase *bārûk haššēm* (Blessed be the Name!, i.e. of God) of the Jews, and of the Divine Praises of the Catholics, Blessed be God, Blessed be his holy name etc., as a contrast to blaspheming the name of God. But the Bible is not primarily concerned with this.

The name of God is blasphemed when Israelites lose their faith in God, are disloyal to him, and as a result are taken into captivity by the oppressing nations Assyria or Babylon, who then begin to revile the name of God and question his authority and power. This aspect is stressed prominently by the prophet Ezekiel but also appears in the Second Isaiah. This idea also surfaces in the later Psalms where we have, "Why should the nations say, Where is your God? (cf. Ps 79:10; see also Ps 42:3,10; 115:2).

6. Sanctification of God's Name

We come now to the main topic of our paper, the sanctification of God's name. This consists not in reciting the praises of his name. Further, sanctification of God's name is done not by human beings but by God himself. No wonder New Testament scholars say that this petition of our Father is eschatological in scope. For it is only in the Messianic times that God's name will be sanctified and vindicated.

And indeed the name of God will be sanctified when God will vindicate his name by punishing the oppressors and redeeming his people. As a result of this both Israel herself as well as the nations will have to bow down to God humbly, and give God the glory due to his holy name. And this YHWH will do, not because Israel has repented but He will do it for the sake of His own holy name! Ezekiel insists that not only the nations but Israel too will have to acknowledge the holiness of his name. We quote one of the most instructive texts of this prophet: "My holy name (*šēm qodšī*) I will make known (*hōdîa'*) among my people Israel, and I will not let my holy name be profaned (*hallēl*) any more; and the nations shall know (*yāda'*)²⁶ that I am the

25 Both *nāqab* and *qallēl* appear in the Hebrew text of the Book of Leviticus (See vv. 15-16).

26 The verb *yāda'* should be translated as 'to recognise' rather than 'to know'. We have here the typical 'recognition formula' (*Erkenntnisaussage*) of Ezekiel,

LORD (i.e., YHWH), the Holy One in Israel" (Ezek 39:7; see also Ezek 20:41; 38:23). That YHWH will vindicate his holy name "for my own sake" (*l'ma' ānī*) is stressed both by Second Isaiah (cf. Isa 43:25; 48:11) as well as by Ezekiel, who has *l'ma'an sh'e mī* "for my name's sake" (Ezek 20:44).

Coming closer to the first petition of the Our Father in Matthew, we find a very enlightening text in the deuterocanonical book of Ben Sira. It runs: "As you have used us (that is, Israel) to show your holiness to them (that is, the nations), so use them to show your glory to us. Then they will know, as we have known, that there is no God but you, O Lord" (Sir 36:4). Ben Sira is trying to tell us that YHWH manifested his holiness to the nations by punishing his own people and handing Israel over to the oppressor (cf. Isa 42:24; cf. also 50:1). Already First Isaiah had questioned Assyria who was boasting that he had pillaged Israel on his own and by his own strength, whereas in fact it was YHWH who had commissioned him for this task! (cf. Isa 10:5-15).

II. Ground of Our Holiness

7. Ethical Implications of Ontological Holiness

Even though originally the term 'holy' was understood ontologically, and was primarily applied to God, and only secondarily to human persons like the Temple, the temple personnel or the temple utensils, as well as certain days like the Sabbath or the Jubilee Year, quite early on the ethical dimension began to be included. The classical text which illustrates this is from the Holiness Code (Lev 17-26). We quote: "The LORD (i.e., YHWH) spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them: You shall be *qād šām*, holy, for I the LORD (YHWH) your God *'am qādōš*, holy!" (Lev 19:1-2). The ethical interpretation is more clear in the text from the Book of Exodus which runs: "Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession

studied in depth by W. Zimmerli. Cf. his "Erkenntnis Gottes nach dem Buche Ezechiel", in *Gottes Offenbarung, Gesammelte Aufsätze zum Alten Testament*, Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1969, 41-119). It appeared originally in 1954.

(*s^egullâ*) out of all the peoples. Indeed the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom (*mamleket kôhănîm*) and a holy nation (*gôy qādôš*)” (Exod 19:5-6).

According to the Deuteronomist what constitutes Israel as a holy people (*‘am qādôš*) is God’s unmerited election of Israel, which is covenantal in character! (cf. Deut 7:6).²⁷ This idea of a free, unmerited election is elaborated in the two verses that follow. Just as the Levites are holy to YHWH because they have been set apart (*hibdîl*, causative form) from the rest of the Israelites (cf. Num 8:5-22), so too Israel becomes holy because YHWH has set her apart from the other nations. The Levites are dedicated (Num 8:11), purified (Num 8:6-7), consecrated or sanctified, (*hiqdîš*, Hiphil or causative form) by God (Num 8:17). In the same way it is God who sanctifies (*m^eqaddēš*, the Piel or factitive form) the priests too (cf. Lev 22:9). Finally it is God who sanctifies (*m^eqaddîškem*, Piel participle) the Israelites (Lev 20:8). As a consequence of this sanctification on the part of God, the Israelites have the duty to present themselves as holy before God: “Consecrate yourselves therefore, (*w^ehitqaddîštem*, Hithpael or Reflexive form), and be holy (*wihyîitem q^dôšîm*), for I am the LORD your God. Keep my statutes, and observe them. I am the LORD; I sanctify you” (Lev 20:7).

8. Christians as ‘The Saints’

It is very revealing to note in this context, that the early Christians called themselves *hoi hagioi*, that is, the saints! (cf. Rom 1:7; Ephes 1:1; Phil 1:1; Col 1:2). And the author of 1 Peter applied the text of Exodus 19:5-6, about Israel as a ‘holy nation’ (*ethnos hagion*) to the Christian community (cf. 1 Pet 2:9). They were of course aware that it was Jesus himself, whom the demons had declared ‘the Holy One of God’ (*ho hagios tou theou*, cf. Mk 1:24), who is the Son of the ‘Holy Father’ (*pater hagios*, cf. Jn 17:11), who had sanctified them in the truth (cf. Jn 17:17). In short the Christians can call themselves *hoi hagioi* (‘the saints’, literally ‘the holy ones’), because they have been sanctified (*hegiasmenoi*) by God (cf. Act 20:32; 1 Cor 1:2).

27 The Hebrew runs: *kî ‘am qādôš ‘attā l’ yhw h ‘ēlôêkā* (Deut 7:6). Literally this means, “Thou art a people holy to YHWH thy God”.

But the New Testament is also aware that the behaviour of the Christians who are 'called saints' (*klētoi hagioi*, Rom 1:6) must correspond to their calling. This is always the theme of the paraenetic part of the Letters of Paul for example (cf. Ephes 4:1).

9. Conclusion

The first petition in Matthew's Gospel, "Hallowed be thy name!" is primarily to be understood as eschatological, following in the train of thought of the post-exilic prophets, specially Ezekiel, who foretold that God would vindicate his holy Name in the eschatological times, by punishing the oppressors and by bringing salvation to his people, so that Israel and the Nations would revere YHWH as the only God and Saviour.

But the prayer could also be understood as a prayer for the individual human beings, specially the Christians, who should avoid profaning the name of God through lack of reverence for God, and absence of faith and morality in their lives. This would surely be the implication of the injunction of the Holiness Code, "Be holy, for I YHWH, your God am holy!" (Lev 19:2 JB).

All the glory would be attributed to God alone whose Spirit given by Jesus would *enable* the human beings to keep God's Law, who left to themselves are *unable* to keep it (cf. Rom 8:1-4). John explains this by saying that the fruits which the Christians produce are because the Christians are the branches united to the Vine, for without Him we can do nothing! (cf. Jn 15; specially v. 5). And so it becomes evident that God alone is holy, and that our holiness is rooted and grounded in the Holiness of God. In other words, God is the Ground of our holiness.

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“Thy Kingdom Come!”: The Kingdom of God as Gift and Responsibility

George Keerankeri

In dealing with the second petition of the Lord's Prayer, the author observes how for Jesus, the kingdom of God was the central theme of his proclamation (Mk 1:14-15). Nevertheless, it was a polyvalent symbol of God's sovereignty, which, primarily, signified not a territory God rules or will rule but God's eschatological activity as ruler, the eschatological coming of God in power to save, to forgive, to reconcile, to renew, and to gather in. Even though the fullness of the kingdom still remains a future reality and its arrival, conceived partially as a judgment, would mark the end or transformation of the world, a perfect state of things would result when God's rule is finally acknowledged. In the meanwhile, the kingdom remains both a gift and a responsibility.

1. Introduction

The Our Father or the Lord's Prayer (LP) is widely known as the central prayer of the Christian community. Renowned for its directness, simplicity and profound trust in God and for its unadorned articulation of human need before God, it has also come to have an impact beyond the boundaries of Christianity. Christians have not only prayed this unique prayer from the beginnings of their movement but different epochs of the history of the Church have also delved deep into its significance and interpreted it afresh. In the process they have derived new insights from its treasures for their life and mission. In similar vein it is fitting to focus in our own day on its depths to discover insights and perspectives that can enrich us in the contemporary Indian Church's life and mission.

The LP is based on Jesus' characteristic address of God as *Abba* or dear Father. Taken in combination with his self-understanding as expressed in Mt 11:27; Lk 10:22, it is at once an expression of his

God-experience and his consciousness of singular and unparalleled closeness to God. Jesus also taught his disciples to address God as Father thus mediating this God-experience to them and making them partakers of it through association with and faith in him. The prayer Jesus taught in this connection eventually became the formal liturgical prayer of the Christian community. This is how one must understand the tradition of Lk 11:1-4 where Jesus teaches his disciples this prayer on their demand as the characteristic prayer of his disciples following the practice of every religious movement in contemporary Judaism to have its own form of prayer given by its leader (cf. Lk 11:1).

2. Structure of the Lord's Prayer

The LP has the following simple structure: (1) the address; (2) two "Thou-petitions" in parallel (in Mt three); (3) two "We-petitions" (in Mt three) in parallel, both forming, an antithesis; (4) the concluding request. It must also be noted that the "Thou-petitions" are asyndetic, that is, they stand side by side without a co-ordinating conjunction like "and", while the "We-petitions" are connected by that conjunction.¹

Authenticity

There is scholarly consensus on the issue that the LP in its essentials goes back to Jesus. The reasons for this are: (1) Semitic specialists can easily translate the LP into good Hebrew or Aramaic even if they may disagree about certain details. (2) The prayer coheres well with what we otherwise know about Jesus and his proclamation. Thus Jesus spoke of God as Father, proclaimed the coming of the kingdom of God, and emphasized the forgiveness of sins. Even if certain of these concerns were shared by others they were central to Jesus and his mission and hence particularly appropriate in a short prayer he constructed. (3) The object of the Church's prayer was the coming of the Lord, not the coming of the kingdom (1Cor 16:22; Rev 22:20; Did 10:6), though these are not unrelated. These three reasons justify the current critical consensus in favor of its authenticity and no serious objections can be raised against it.²

1 J. Jeremias, *The Lord's Prayer*, 17.

2 W.D. Davies & D.C. Allison Jr., *The Gospel according to Matthew, I-VII*, 1/3, 592-93.

3. The Inter-relatedness of the “Thou-Petitions”

The three “Thou-petitions” not only have a parallel structure but also a basic similarity of content. Thus they follow the same construction: aorist imperative + article + subject + *sou*. This also reflects the common contention as also the fact that “on earth as it is in heaven” could properly be subjoined to each. As Davies and Allison observe: “The coming of the kingdom, the hallowing of God’s name and the doing of God’s will on earth as in heaven are in essence all one: each looks at the *telos* of history, each refers to the fitting culmination of God’s salvific work.”³

All three of them pray for the final manifestation of the kingdom. However, it is only when the kingdom is finally manifest, will God’s name be fully hallowed and God’s will be fully done on earth as it is in heaven. All three requests thus center around the principal thematic of Jesus’ proclamation, the kingdom of God, and ask for its final fulfillment.⁴

4. Thy Kingdom Come

The “Thou-petition”, “Thy Kingdom come”, is understood in two ways: (1) it may refer to the good of others, that is, of those outside the circle of the followers of Jesus to experience the coming of the kingdom; (2) it may be taken as a petition for the present experience of the disciples to come to its eschatological consummation.⁵ More fittingly, it may involve both of these understandings together. In both cases, this second “Thou-petition” looks to the future and prays for the fulfillment of the kingdom and in so doing implicitly acknowledges its magnificence and requests God to bring it about now.⁶

3 *Ibid.*, 603; D. A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 148.

4 D. J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 97, accordingly emphasizes that the central petition in the LP is the “Thou- petition”: “Thy kingdom come” (6:10a) while the two “Thou—petitions” that frame it “express hopes for what conditions will be when God’s kingdom comes—all creatures will declare the holiness of God, and God’s will is to be done perfectly on earth.”

5 Thus D. A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 148 holds that “the disciples are here encouraged to pray that what has begun in the ministry of Jesus, what they have now begun to participate in, may be experienced in all fullness”.

6 W.D. Davies & D.C. Allison Jr., *The Gospel according to Matthew, I-VII*, 1/3, 603-604.

a) *Coming of the kingdom as an object of prayer*

The presupposition of the petition "Thy kingdom come" is that prayer can speed up the coming of God's kingdom as implied in the parable of the unjust judge (Lk 18:1-8) in which the eschatological act of salvation is represented as an answer of God to the cry for justice. God would act speedily for the sake of the elect who cry out to him continually and hasten the day of salvation (cf. Mk 13:20). Although there is the point that God knows all our needs and hence there is no need to inform him of them (Mt 6:8), yet all the other petitions in the LP are made in the hope that God hears and answers the requests of his people. Thus the implication of the prayer is that the coming of the kingdom is, like the other objects of prayer in the LP: bread, forgiveness, and deliverance from evil, a correct object of petition. Thus it embodies the conviction that God would hear the prayer of the disciples of Jesus and hasten the realization of the kingdom in its fullness.⁷ But this realization is not a coming about of the kingdom but involves the divine action of bringing it about⁸ and that too in the realm of time.⁹

5. The Concept of the Kingdom of God

For Jesus the kingdom of God (*ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ*), the central theme of his proclamation (Mk 1:14-15)¹⁰, was a polyvalent symbol of God's sovereignty¹¹. It primarily signified not a territory God rules or will rule but God's eschatological activity as ruler, the eschatological coming of God in power to save, to forgive, to reconcile, to renew, and to gather in. The genitive "of God" thus indicates the author of this rule. Its fullness was still unrealized and its arrival, conceived

7 *Ibid.*, 604.

8 E. Lohmeyer, *The Lord's Prayer*, trans. J. Bowden, London: Collins, 1965, 108, comments in this connection: "The very colourlessness of this word ["come"] conceals the depth of the surrender in which the suppliants look for the kingdom, and the magnitude and grace of the divine will, which its coming implies."

9 R. E. Brown, "The Pater Noster as an Eschatological Prayer", 190, n. 62.

10 Cf. J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, Vol. I, 96.

11 Cf. N. Perrin, *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom, Symbol and Metaphor in New Testament Interpretation*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985, 33-34.

partially as a judgment, would mark the end or transformation of the world, a perfect state of things in which God's will would be perfectly fulfilled (Mt 6:10a=Lk 11:2e; Mt 8:11=Lk 13:28-29; and Mk 14:25).¹²

a) The evolution of the concept of the kingdom of God

While the concept of the Kingdom of God was known in the Old Testament as referring to God's role in creation and his sovereignty over it (Ps 74:12-17; Ps 93; 97; 99; 145:10-14), and to God's marvelous role in the liberation of Israel in the Exodus (Ps 136: 10-15 + Ex, 15:18-19), his powerful acts in her sojourn in the wilderness, conquest and settlement in the promised land (Ps 136: 16-22 + Ex 15:17-18), and later to Davidic messianism (2 Sam 7:12-16 + Is 11:1-9) and apocalyptic hope (Is 65:25 + Dan 12:1-31; Henoch XCL.14-17),¹³ what Jesus proclaims is this *final* realization of the sovereignty of God, its eschatological fulfillment in the fullness of time. Hence Jesus announces pointedly: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel." (Mk 1:14-15). Its final and eschatological nature thus distinguishes his proclamation of the kingdom from all earlier conceptions and states of being of it.

b) Jesus and the kingdom

In the gospel narrative of Mk the kingdom of God as a polyvalent symbol serves as a means for the revelation of God's sovereignty as described and its realization in Jesus' person and ministry. It thus functions as a comprehensive term for the ministry of Jesus as well as the mystery of his person, his death and resurrection in relation to this sovereignty of God.

That the Kingdom of God is a reality which manifests itself in Jesus' person, ministry, passion, death, and resurrection is narratively affirmed in the gospel of Mk by the programmatic announcement of the imminent coming of the kingdom (Mk 1:14-15) being followed by the narrative of Jesus' ministry, passion, death and resurrection (Mk 1:16-16,8), with no attempt, apart from this, either to define the concept

12 W.D. Davies & D.C. Allison Jr., *The Gospel according to Matthew, I-VII*, 1/3, 389.

13 In the Old Testament contexts we find the acclamation "God reigns" while the term kingdom of God found in late Judaism and in the New Testament is the abstract equivalent of this same reality.

of the kingdom or to describe the concrete manner of its realization anywhere else in it¹⁴. It thus implies in Mk that the kingdom comes precisely in and through the person, ministry, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus¹⁵.

By this fundamental theme of his proclamation Jesus announces the definitive realization of the sovereignty of God in and through his person, mission and destiny. While it is thus intimately related to his person and mission, it is meant to envelop and transform the whole of reality: all of humanity along with its socio-cultural structures, and the very cosmos itself.

c) *Its nature as an already and not-yet*

Yet Jesus also spoke of God's rule as being already present in his person and ministry. This is clear especially in Mt 12:28=Lk 11:20 whose meaning is explained in several images in the Synoptic tradition. These include that of Satan being already cast out of heaven (Lk 10:18) and bound (Mk 3:27); of a new wine (Mk 2:22); something greater than Solomon or Jonah being present in Israel (Mt 12:41-42; Lk 11:31-32); of the privilege of Jesus' contemporaries who can see what the prophets and righteous longed to see and could not (Mt 13:16-17=Lk 10:23-24).

Although there is some tension between the presence of the kingdom and its future coming there is no contradiction between them. When Jesus announces that the kingdom of God has come and is coming, this means that the eschatological act of God in bringing about the kingdom has begun but not yet reached its climax.¹⁶ Although an end time reality, it includes both an *already* and a *not-yet*.

While as an "already" it manifests itself in the person and mission of Jesus as indicated by the narrative, it reaches a decisive point in

14 Admittedly, Jesus' parables and sayings reflect aspects of the kingdom and these have a bearing on its understanding. But none of them singly, nor all of them collectively, actually define it nor give us an exhaustive presentation of it.

15 Cf. K. Stock, *Marco, Commento contestuale al secondo Vangelo*, Bibbia e Preghiera, n.47, Roma: Edizioni ADP, 2003, 35-36.

16 W.D. Davies & D.C. Allison Jr., *The Gospel according to Matthew, I-VII*, 1/3, 389-390.

the resurrection of Jesus (Mk 9:1)¹⁷. In Jesus' resurrection the kingdom of God comes with power.

But as a "not yet" it also knows a future still, in so far as it remains to be fully appropriated by all which is still to happen at a world-wide level¹⁸ and more importantly in so far as its final fulfillment lies beyond history (Mk 13:27). The last characteristic points to its transcendental destiny¹⁹ (cf. Mk 14:25). Specifically, this last is the object of the prayer for the coming of the kingdom.

d) *The kingdom in Matthew*

Although unlike in Mk, Mt's summary of Jesus' proclamation is differently formulated (Mt 4:17) making it identical with that of John the Baptist's (Mt 3:2)²⁰, he does share this conception of the coming of the kingdom of God²¹ first of all in Jesus, his ministry (Mt 12:28; 12:41-42; 13:16-17), his death resurrection²². Mt also speaks of the

17 K. Stock, *Marco*, 162-163; Also, Van Den Bussche, *Understanding the Lord's Prayer*, 88, who adds that the kingdom came with power at the end of Jesus' life, when he himself became the Son of God with power (Rom 1:4) and further observes that this interpretation is confirmed by the fact that the kingdom of Satan suffered at that moment a capital defeat (Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 1Cor 2:8) and that even though Satan is not yet totally eliminated (2Cor 4:4; Eph 2:2), he is nevertheless defeated in principle.

18 Cf. G. Lohfink, "Die Not der Exegese mit der Reich-Gottes Verkündigung Jesu", in *Studien zum Neuen Testament*, Stuttgarter Biblische Aufsatzbände Neues Testament 5, Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk GmbH, 1989, 396.

19 Cf. N. Perrin, *The Kingdom of God in the teaching of Jesus*, Suffolk, 1963, 183; Van Den Bussche, *Understanding the Lord's Prayer*, 88.

20 Despite the identity of the formulations, however, their differing circumstances point to specificities in their concrete content, the most important of the former being those between the proclaimers themselves. Thus John is the precursor while Jesus is the Son of God whose Kingdom he announces.

21 Mt usually uses the phrase "kingdom of heaven." "Kingdom of God", the expression figuring in Mk and Lk so often, occurs only in Mt 12:28; 19:24; 21:31.43 and in 6:33 which is a textually doubtful case. Most scholars assume that "kingdom of heaven" is the equivalent of "kingdom of God", 'heaven' being a periphrasis for God.

22 Cf. G. Lohfink, "Die Korrelation von Reich Gottes und Volk Gottes bei Jesus", in *Studien zum Neuen Testament*, Stuttgarter Biblische Aufsatzbände Neues Testament 5, Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk GmbH,

full manifestation of this kingdom in the coming of the Son of Man in glory as king at the end of the ages to execute judgment (Mt 25: 31.32) which thus clarifies it as related to eschatological fulfillment.

6. The Kingdom as Gift and as Responsibility

a) *Kingdom as gift*

The every fact that this is a petition addressed to God presupposes that what is prayed for, the coming of the kingdom is a gift which purely human efforts cannot bring about. It is a reality which God must accomplish through his almighty power. Thus God is the primary agent in causing the kingdom to come. The real problem is whether this petition of the LP deals primarily with a question of everyday growth of the kingdom or with the definitive reign (kingdom) of God at the end of the world. On purely grammatical basis the aorist is more favorable to the latter since the aorist has the clear nuance of the once-for-all-ness (*Einmaligkeit*) of the act of God.²³

i. *The awaited fullness of the kingdom*

Although, as we just saw above the coming of the kingdom of God is to a certain extent identical with Jesus' coming (Mk 1:15; Mt 4:17; 10:7; 12: 28) and reaches a definitive point in his resurrection where it has come with power, yet the fullness of that kingdom is still awaited.²⁴ Although the power of Satan is foundationally broken, as long as Satan

1989,77. G. Lohfink, "Die Not der Exegese mit der Reich-Gottes Verkündigung Jesu", 388; See also, J. Gnllka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, 2/2, HKNT, Freiburg. Basel. Wien, 1992, 478; W.D. Davies & D.C. Allison Jr. *Matthew*, XIX-XXVIII, 3/3, ICC, Edinburgh, 1997, 629. 632, especially, 664.

23 R. E. Brown, "The Pater Noster as an Eschatological Prayer", 185; Also, E. Lohmeyer, *The Lord's Prayer*, 79-80, who observes that this once-for-allness is stressed by the constant use of the aorist not only in all the three "Thou-petitions" but through out the whole prayer. He further points out that this understanding of the once-for-allness is unmistakably confirmed by the 'come' of the petition "thy kingdom come" which speaks of a sole eschatological event not only in form but also in content.

24 As E. Lohmeyer, *The Lord's Prayer*, 106, puts it: "The words of Jesus can proclaim it, his signs may prepare for it in many ways, they may even bear witness to its existence-the kingdom nevertheless remains something which comes from heaven, as it is the final eschatologically fulfilled kingdom. So the prayer can and always must be, 'Thy kingdom come'."

continues to exercise power in this world God's reign is not perfected (Lk 4:6; 1Jn 5:19). It cannot come in its fullness until Christ's return. Only then will the forces of evil, that are decisively overcome, be totally destroyed and God's kingdom will reach its eschatological culmination. The petition "Thy kingdom come" concerns this final coming of God's kingdom. Thus when the Christian community utters this "Thou petition" they are primarily asking that God's universal reign be established in its fullness, that destiny toward which the whole of time is directed.²⁵ The petition thus entreats God for the full realization and revelation of what has already been granted.

From all this it becomes clear that the kingdom is not primarily a human utopia, a socio-political idea, not even a set of "values". It is not essentially a human construction. It is basically an action of God coming with his sovereign power and saving intent. As mentioned above, as the saving action of God, its outreach and extension is comprehensive and it integrates within it all the dimensions of human existence such as socio-economic, political, cultural, ecological as well as ethical and spiritual.

Since the basis of the kingdom of God is the saving action of God it also rules out expressions of the kingdom as the outcome of human action. Expressions like "building the kingdom", which one often hears, make no sense in this perspective. In fact they are even semantically meaningless as what they assert is that one must build "God rules" or "God as ruler".²⁶ Thus the "Thou-petition" "Thy kingdom come", like the other "Thou-petitions", emphasizes the utter gift character of the kingdom that is prayed for.

b) Kingdom as responsibility

But this radical gift character of the kingdom as an object of prayer does not imply that there is nothing left for the disciples of Jesus to do. Its gift character corresponds well with a living in accordance with the gift of God. Thus one who prays for this eschatological gift

25 R. E. Brown, "The Pater Noster as an Eschatological Prayer", 189-190.

26 L. Legrand, "Good News Kingdom and Conversion", in *The Word is Near You*, Collected Papers of L. Legrand, MEP, (eds.) A. A. Xavier, M. D. Stanly Kumar, Bangalore: St Peter's Pontifical Institute, 2002, Vol. II, 2-3.

must even now act in a way that contributes to the furthering of God's dominion.²⁷ Moreover, although the disciples cannot bring that kingdom into existence by their own efforts, yet they are to reflect the good news of its inauguration in and through Jesus and are to manifest the reality of the presence of the kingdom as is implied in Mt 5:13-16.²⁸

In this perspective it appears to be theologically legitimate, as Lucien Legrand points out, to apply the word kingdom in a deductive way to human co-operation with God's plan.²⁹ But as the author insists it should be clear that we are only deducing a manner of action consistent with the kingdom and not saying exactly what Jesus meant when he proclaimed the kingdom of God, the coming of God in his saving sovereignty.³⁰

While this much is true, it also follows that it cannot certainly be understood nor identified with any particular human project or vision, however grandiose, of the ordering of society or cosmos. Since the kingdom is the rule of the transcendent God, the salvation God brings will transcend all human planning and realization. Hence the Christian engagement in the coming of the kingdom must reflect this transcendent character of the salvific gift of God. As Legrand would have it, it should reflect both God's immanence and transcendence. While under the impulse of the God of creation, it is at one with all human efforts and struggles thus contributing to the completion of the work of creation, it must at the same time respond to the reality of the God of the *eschaton*, and thus respect the transcendent character of his salvific gift. The consequence is that by its very nature the Christian engagement with the kingdom "looks beyond any human platform, perceives their ambiguity and keeps a prophetic distance towards human plans and realizations."³¹

27 W.D. Davies & D.C. Allison Jr., *The Gospel according to Matthew, I-VII*, 1/3, 603.

28 D. A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 148.

29 L. Legrand, "Good News Kingdom and Conversion", 3.

30 *Ibid.*, 3.

31 *Ibid.*

7. Recent Hermeneutical Attempts in this Light

Looking at the hermeneutical attempts in India in the recent past in interpreting the kingdom of God from this perspective we find that, while we do have some reason for rejoicing in the attempts made to translate it in a relevant way into our present day context, we also need to undertake certain correctives to keep these attempts within the parameters of the kingdom.

A case in point is George Soares Prabhu's interpretation of the kingdom of God³² which has dominated Indian exegesis and theology for the past nearly two and a half decades. In the light of the vision of the kingdom as prayed for and as characterized above this hermeneutic of the kingdom needs a critical reappraisal. Relevant in this connection is the contention of Soares Prabhu that the kingdom of God represents a set of universal values such as freedom, fellowship, and justice as the basis for a new society³³.

a) The characterization as inadequate

In the light of our discussion of the nature of the kingdom this characterization of the kingdom of God seems to us to be inadequate. While these values of freedom, fellowship and justice may well have a kinship with part of what the kingdom stands for and thus may find a place in the kingdom-community and, indeed, may also have a relevance in the thematic's contemporary hermeneutizing for building a better world, reduction of the kingdom to this set of values is falls short of its reality.

On the one hand, the reduction of the kingdom to these values does not sufficiently emphasize the fundamental character of the kingdom as divine initiative, even when one conceives these as the

32 Cf. G. Soares Prabhu, "The Kingdom of God: Jesus' Vision of a New Society", in *Theology of Liberation: An Indian Biblical Perspective*, Collected Writings of G. M. Soares-Prabhu, S.J., (ed.) F. X. D'Sa, 223-251, Pune, 2001, Vol. 4.

33 Cf. G. Soares Prabhu, "The Kingdom of God: Jesus' Vision of a New Society", 239, who towards the end of his discussion says: "Freedom, fellowship and justice are [...] the parameters of the Kingdom's thrust towards the total liberation of man. Together they spell out the significance of the Kingdom, and tell us what the Kingdom, in practice, means today".

outcome of an encounter with the revolutionizing love of God. There is still too much of the human project and utopia about it. In fact, freedom, fellowship, and justice, as the ensemble of values of the kingdom, sound like the barely concealed slogans of the French Revolution: "liberté, égalité, fraternité."

Besides, the operation of this ensemble of values in their gradual or ever perfect realizations will not and cannot reach the perfection of the kingdom of God. There is the final eschatological action of God that it must submit to, the renewal, the *paliggenesia* (Mt 19:28), wherein of course what is positive in these human strivings will also find a place. But God would invest it with much more, beyond all our calculations and imaginings.

Equally importantly, these values, while they go part of the way in the direction of what the kingdom represents, do not exhaust the reality which the kingdom stands for. The radical values and attitudes, for instance, that the Sermon on the Mount, in particular, its so-called antitheses (5:21-48), outline and are to be embodied in the kingdom-community go far beyond them, as they enjoin self-denial and heroism of the most extreme kind as manifestations of radical obedience to God and radical love of people. The absolute demands of non-retaliation (5:38-42) and love of enemy (5:43-47) in imitation of the perfection of the heavenly Father himself (5:48) is a case in point.

b) The characterization as restrictive and reductionist

Further, this representation of the kingdom misses the vertical dimension of it which is most fundamental. The kingdom is essentially the revelation of the sovereignty of God. At its center is the God who reveals himself as *Abba* in Jesus who comes with his almighty power and unconditional love to save, to forgive and to gather in (Mk 1:14-15). The society that the kingdom creates is centered on this God and responds to him, in the first place, in thankfulness and single-minded devotion, expressed in worship and the observance of his commandments, and then in turning to the neighbor in self-denying love and service. (Mk 12:28-34), thus making possible a new society based on the new revelation. It thus involves both a vertical and a horizontal level. To paraphrase the reality of the kingdom in terms of

freedom, fellowship and justice alone is thus insufficient, as this is restrictive and reductionist.³⁴

At the basis of this reductionism is the author's interpretation of the love commandment (Mk 12:28-34) which in effect collapses the first commandment into the second when he says: "To love God with all one's heart now means to love one's neighbor as oneself. The love commandment of Jesus is, then, that we love God by loving neighbor".³⁵ In reality they not only retain their individuality but possess a hierarchical gradation as the first most important (Mk 12:29) and the second most important (Mk 12:31) commandment of all, even as they are interrelated within such a hierarchically conceived totality (Mk 12:31b).³⁶

c) *The place of Jesus in the kingdom*

Finally, Soares Prabhu's hermeneusis of the kingdom of God also does not sufficiently take into account the place of Jesus in the coming of the kingdom. Jesus' role has been reduced by the author to that of the proclaimer of the kingdom and to a model and promoter of these values.³⁷ However, this is far from adequate. As we saw in our analysis of Mk 1:14-15, the programmatic summary of the gospel narrative depicts Jesus not only as proclaiming the long awaited coming of the kingdom. The narrative in fact affirms that this kingdom, the eschatological comprehensive sovereignty of God, comes in and

34 It may be mentioned that in substance these points have already been made in G. Keerankeri,, "Matthew's Gospel and the Kingdom-Church Discourse", in A. Malina (ed.) *On His Way, Studies in Honour of Professor Klemens Stock, S.J. on the Occasion of his 70-th Birthday*, Studia i Materiały Wydziału Teologicznego Uniwersytetu Śląskiego w Katowicach Nr 21, Księgarnia św. Jacka Katowice, (Poland), 2004, [102-120], 113, n. 50.

35 G. Soares Prabhu, "The Kingdom of God: Jesus' Vision of a New Society," 241.

36 Cf. G. Keerankeri, *The Love Commandment in Mark, An Exegetico-Theological Study of Mk 12:28-34*, Analecta Biblica 150, Roma, 2003, 133-137. Incidentally, this study also delves into the New Testament depth and extension of the two commandments and offers a new and original interpretation of them in Mk.

37 Cf. G. Soares Prabhu, "The Kingdom of God: Jesus' Vision of a New Society", 239-242.

through him, his ministry and his death resurrection. It is this fact that is asserted in this programmatic summary being immediately followed by the call of the first disciples and then the rest of the ministry and his death resurrection. The narrative logic is that it is in and through him that the Kingdom primarily and fundamentally comes. This is particularly true about Jesus' death-resurrection and this point is made by Mk 9:1: "There are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Kingdom of God come with power." Whatever it refers to in the other gospels (cf. Mt 6:28; Lk 9:27), in Mk it clearly points to the resurrection as we have already noted above. What is spoken of here took place in the resurrection of Jesus.

This indeed is the reason why the apostolic Church preaches Christ when Jesus preached the kingdom of God. There is no distortion involved in this transformation either. The apostolic proclamation is the flowering and culmination of Jesus' ministry. As Legrand clarifies, the kingdom proclaimed by Christ is not a program or ideology but God's coming in his loving sovereignty so also the Christ announced by the apostolic church is no mere name to be brandished as a banner but Jesus-Christ, a concrete figure who proclaimed and stood for a definite understanding of the mind and purpose of the Father, a certain image of the reign of God as service and not power, to the poor and not in collusion with the powerful, in the kenosis of the cross and not in self-glorification and conquest.

In the resurrection God has put the seal of approval on this understanding of his reign and the mission of Jesus and embodied in him and thereby these have been universalized. There is therefore continuity between Jesus' kingdom proclamation and the apostolic Church's proclamation of Christ. In proclaiming the kingdom thus one proclaims not a set of values but the concrete image that Jesus gave of his Father, of his will and his reign and reciprocally in proclaiming Christ one proclaims what Jesus stood and died for evoking the divine power of the resurrection at work in this human image.³⁸

Having articulated the kingdom in terms of a set of abstract values, of freedom, fellowship and justice, and reduced Jesus' role to the

38 Cf. L. Legrand, "Good News Kingdom and Conversion", 6.

proclaimer of the kingdom and to a model and promoter of these values, the interpretation of Soares Prabhu is incapable of expressing this interconnection and the unique role Jesus has played in the divine plan of salvation, that is, in the coming of the kingdom of God.

8. Conclusion

The foregoing correctives are meant to re-draw the correct parameters of the coming of the kingdom and they in no way deny the need for human co-operation vis-à-vis its coming. There is need to live in the perspective of the action of God and to do our utmost in consistency with it, even as we ardently pray for God's bringing about the kingdom. For this very reason, it is in order that we purify our expressions and terminology which confuse the true nature of the kingdom. In particular, it is necessary to eschew all ideologization and reductionism of it into human utopias and projects. With these correctives in place, we can and should contribute to the kingdom by living and acting in consistency with God's action for which we pray each time we utter the "Thou-petition": "Thy kingdom come".

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God's Will: A Present Imperative!

Assisi Saldanha

The third petition, concerning God's will is unique to Matthew. The author proposes that it has come to us through the endeavour of a pre-Matthean community that found itself in confrontation with the laxity of Gentile Christians at Antioch, for whom and on whose account Matthew intended this petition as a sure guidepost. That means, in the face of a misguided notion of freedom on the part of these Gentiles, which in practice took away the commandment, this petition, is meant to reinstate the essence of the love commandment at the very centre of it and will, therefore, for the disciples remain always a present imperative. The imperative should make sense all the more if we perceive that we live in a world of "ethical disorientation" and "anything goes" attitude of the postmodern society. In the midst of an increasing secularization of society, in which secularism itself has become a new religion, even in a country like ours, the third petition invites us to a new centering, an alternative way of life.

Is the Lord's Prayer (LP) really a plea to God to act now what he is expected to do only in the distant future? That is, is the LP eschatological in the sense that it serves as an entreaty to God to hasten the coming of his Kingdom and to make available his end-time blessings in the present? J.B. Gibson believes that the LP instead addresses a present predicament. It is a prayer that our Lord gives to his disciples, who he knows are in grave danger of being engulfed in his generation's apostasy. The LP is then a plea that God would protect the disciples of Jesus by being granted the gift of faithfulness.¹ In other words, it is a prayer meant to enable discipleship rather than to call on God to change a distant and a future eschatology into a realized one.

¹ J.B. Gibson, "Matthew 6:9-13/Luke 11:2-4: An Eschatological Prayer?" *BTB* 31 (2001) 96-105.

Gibson argued that in both Matthew and Luke, the Kingdom is described as a powerfully present reality. If so, why would the LP urge anyone to pray for a *fait accompli*?² Gibson believes Mt is in fact employing a realized eschatology. On this basis, the LP becomes a plea for securing divine aid against the apostasy of “this generation”, a prayer for preservation in faithfulness and avoidance of apostasy in the present. The present generation is in danger of repeating the apostasy of the “wilderness generation”. From such a perspective, the petition, “Thy will be done as in heaven so on earth”, is really “to have God ensure that the will of his people is coordinate with and not antithetical to God’s own purposes for them.”³

1. The LP in the Context of Jesus’ Ministry

We believe the LP must be seen in the context of the ministry of Jesus which is teaching, preaching and healing. Such a ministry is framed by an *inclusio*, i.e., Mt 4:23 and 9:35. The Sermon on the Mount (SM) in Mt 5-7 covers the aspects of Jesus’ teaching and preaching and Mt 8-9 gives us his miracles. The LP is an integral part of the SM and hence its understanding in every sense of the word must be dictated by the orientation of the SM. The Beatitudes, it would seem, manifest a future eschatology except when the Beatitudes relate to the Kingdom as in Mt 5:3 and 5:10, which in some measure reveal the Kingdom to be something present.⁴

Let’s turn to the framing verses: Mt 9:35 repeats 4:23. Jesus went about “teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom....” The phrase “gospel of the kingdom” is unique to Mt. It occurs once more in 24:14. This unique phrase which frames the SM would have us understand that the “sermon on the mount contains ‘the gospel of the kingdom’”⁵. This would imply that when

2 *Ibid.*, 103.

3 *Ibid.*, 104.

4 But for the noted exceptions, the promise in the remaining beatitudes is expressed in the future tense.

5 W.D. Davies and D.C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, ICC, 3 Vols., Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd., 1988, 1.414.

Jesus declares that the kingdom of heaven is at hand, he in fact inaugurates the kingdom, and this is the good news (cf. Mt 4:17). "The Messiah' revelatory words and commands and their complete realization in his deeds and person (cf. 26:13) reveal God's activity (the kingdom) and are good news."⁶ The kingdom in Mt appears to be something that is inaugurated and, therefore, present.

a) Jesus' demands in the light of his proclamation of the kingdom

The present nature of the kingdom has consequences. It makes demands on the disciples. These demands are intimately connected with the notion of the kingdom in Mt 5:20, 6:33, 7:21. Mt 5:20 expects of the disciples of Jesus a higher righteousness than that of the scribes and Pharisees if they are to enter the Kingdom of heaven. The idea is repeated somewhat in 6:33. And, in 7:21 the demands of the kingdom are presented as being contained in the will of the Father, which has to be done.

However, it is useful to observe that even though the idea of the Kingdom in the SM is denoted in present tense yet the remaining beatitudes in Mt 5:4-9 contain a future dimension. Would this imply that in the light of the kingdom which has arrived in the person and ministry of Jesus, the disciples are actually being told their present predicament has positive consequences but which will unfold only in the future? Such questions need to be asked before we decide the eschatological orientation of the SM and that of the LP within it. But one thing appears certain, the beatitudes involving the Kingdom (Mt 5:3,10) are in the present and form an *inclusio*. The beatitudes within the bounds of this *inclusio* are in the future.

b) The immediate context of the LP

The immediate context of the LP is the triple teaching of the Lord on almsgiving, prayer and fasting. That Jesus is addressing his disciples here there's little doubt. Jesus in each case provides for his disciples a teaching that is a marked contrast to what the hypocrites do. These hypocrites must be identified on the basis of Mt 5:20 as being the

6 *Ibid.*, 414.

scribes and Pharisees. The LP occurs actually in the even more immediate context of Jesus' teaching on prayer. And, of the three teachings, namely, that on almsgiving, prayer and fasting, only that on prayer has been given from a dual perspective. The first serves to contrast the way a disciple should pray in comparison to the hypocrites. The second perspective on prayer is in the context of how the Gentiles pray. It is the second that is important for it is in relation to it that the LP is given.

Mt 6:7-8 reads: "And in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him." If the hypocrites love to attract attention to themselves by standing in the synagogues and at street corners, the Gentiles seem to love long prayers, which Jesus seems to think are merely empty phrases.⁷ With what Gentile way of praying does Jesus find fault? Is it just their length of prayer? It is unlikely that Jesus treats it as empty prayer just because it is long.⁸ Rather, it would seem the Gentiles have many needs and these would require many words.⁹ What's wrong in expressing our needs? For one thing, the Father knows what we need (6:8b). This aspect becomes clear in the context of another passage in the SM, namely Mt 6:25-34.

⁷ Some might be tempted to think that Jesus here has the Jewish prayers in mind. See, for example, Origen, who says "whoever babbles in praying is...in the lower stage, that of the synagogue." Here cf. U. Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, A Continental Commentary, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989, 366, who also mentions some modern authors who think likewise. It seems to us that if Jesus in giving us the LP was influenced by Jewish prayers of his day, it would be unlikely that he would be criticizing their prayers at the same time.

⁸ W. Carter, *Matthew and the Margins. A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2005, 162, where he thinks the central issue is not long prayers per se, for Jesus himself prays all night in Mt 14:23-25, and repeatedly in 26:36-46.

⁹ Mt 6:7b: "for they think that they will be heard for their many words" is significant because it could mean that by using many words to express a need they presumed to wear God down (*fatigare deos* an expression used by Seneca, *Epistulae ad Lucilium* 31.5. Translated by R.M. Gummere, LCL, Cambridge, MA., 1962-1967).

2. Source-Critical Questions concerning the Third Petition: “Thy will be done as in heaven so on earth,”

Why is the petition, “Thy will be done as in heaven so on earth,” missing from the Lukan account of the LP? According to J. Jeremias “the Lukan version has preserved the oldest form with respect to *length*, but the Matthean text is more original with regard to *wording*.”¹⁰ If that is accepted, then this petition under scrutiny did not originally belong to the prayer Jesus taught his disciples. For if the longer Matthean version were original why would Lk possibly excise three petitions¹¹ out of it considering it was a prayer taught by our Lord himself. How do we explain the additions to the LP in the Matthean version, especially the petition we are considering?

a) *The influence of Q!*

Davies and Allison¹² think it possible that either the Matthean or Lukan version of the LP derives from Q and the other from M or L. Of the available choices, it is more probable, however, that Luke preserves the Q version which also happened to be the original one in respect to length of the prayer, that is, with regard to the number of petitions and Pater as the form of address. But, what then about the Matthean version? Speaking about the Matthean community, Luz remarks, “Mark’s gospel was an external influence on a community shaped by traditions and Jewish Christian piety of the Sayings Source.”¹³

10 J. Jeremias, *Jesus and the Message of the New Testament*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002, 48.

11 The personal address “our” and the abode of God, “who art in heaven,” “thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven,” and “deliver us from the evil one,” are all absent from the Lukan Gospel. These appear as expansions in Mt for these “are always found toward the end of a section of the prayer: the first at the end of the address, the second at the end of the ‘Thou-petitions,’ and the third at the end of the ‘We-petitions’.” See here J. Jeremias, *Jesus and the Message of the New Testament*, 45.

12 W.D. Davies and D.C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 1.591.

13 U. Luz, *Studies in Matthew*, Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 2005, 9.

In the light of Luz's studies on the influence of Q on the Matthean community, we might have to posit that the LP comes to Mt also from Q but in a way different from that by which it came to Lk. We need to keep in mind the view of Jeremias that the number of petitions in Lk being original, the extra three petitions in Mt would not have come from Q even though the Matthean community was according to Luz shaped by the Jewish Christian piety of the Sayings Source, that is, the Q tradition unless this Sayings Source was significantly different from the one available to Lk. Would an additional source such as M be able to provide these three petitions? In order to answer this question it is well to compare the Matthean form of the LP with the other Jewish prayer forms of the day.

b) The influence of Jewish prayers!

The first is the Kaddish prayer which was prayed in the synagogue after the sermon. The first two petitions of the LP in Mt appear to be formulated under the influence of the Kaddish prayer.¹⁴ Again, was the LP a Christian counterpart to the Eighteen Benedictions or the Shemoneh 'Esreh or perhaps still of the shortened version of it which the Jews prayed three times each day? At least the Christian prayer book, the Didache 8:2 after giving almost a word for word rendition of the Matthean version of the LP says in 8:3 that it is to be prayed three times a day. Was that meant to show that the LP was a Christian alternative to the eighteen Benedictions?¹⁵

c) The influence of the Matthean liturgical community!

What emerges from such a comparison is that the petition in Mt 6:10bc does not actually spring from a Jewish prayer milieu. For example, neither the Kaddish nor the Eighteen Benedictions really formulate this petition as we have it in the LP. Of course, the petition is found in the Didache 8:2 but what can we make of it? Does that reveal a dependence on Mt as some believe?¹⁶ But according to Luz,

¹⁴ W.D. Davies and D.C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 1.595.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.596-597. See also D. J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, SP, Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1991, 98-99.

¹⁶ W.D. Davies and D.C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 1.597.

"The Didache, however, does not copy Matthew but receives the Matthean texts in the form in which they remained in the memory of the community."¹⁷ Further Luz admits that what is additional in Mt was already available to him and if he incorporated these petitions into the LP, "the special petitions illustrate how much the evangelist in his own diction takes up the language of his community."¹⁸ That would mean that the difference in the Matthean and Lukan versions of the LP results not from Mt's redaction of the material as an aid for prayer but from liturgical use of the prayer in the community.¹⁹

Here it is pertinent to ask what caused the Matthean community to use this petition in its liturgy. Again, according to Luz, the addition of petitions in Mt was to make the LP more symmetrical.²⁰ We, however, would dare to give an alternate explanation. As we have noted above, the Matthean Jesus gives the prayer to his disciples in marked contrast to the way Gentiles pray. They confuse length with fidelity or perhaps fluency with sincerity.²¹ Jesus, however, invites his disciples to seek first things first and then to trust in the providence of God. Anxiety about tomorrow was a Gentile concern. Was the community of Mt immune to Gentile concerns? It is very possible that the Jewish Christians of the Matthean church found themselves a minority amidst the Gentiles at Antioch.²² It is also possible that this Jewish Christian Matthean community gradually became more open to the Gentiles and was absorbed by the Gentile church.²³ However,

17 U. Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 370.

18 *Ibid.*

19 W. Carter, "Recalling the Lord's Prayer: The Authorial Audience and Matthew's Prayer as Familiar Liturgical Experience," *CBQ* 57 (1995) 517-518.

20 U. Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 371.

21 D. McBride, *Seasons of the Word. Reflections on the Sunday Readings*, Chawton: Redemptorist Publ., 1991, 68.

22 W. Carter, *Matthew and the Margins. A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading*, 27-29. He believes there may have been anything between nineteen or 150 or even a thousand Christians in a city of 150,000 to 200,000.

23 U. Luz, *Studies in Matthew*, 9-11. See also his, *The Theology of the Gospel of Matthew*, Cambridge: University Press, 1996, 16.

in the process, this small minority of the Matthean community was exposed to the thinking and practices of the majority Gentile population at Antioch, which was the capital of the Roman province of Syria. But how was this small community to live? "The community of disciples lived its distinctive existence in the midst of, yet in tension with this Roman world, knowing that one day God's empire will be established."²⁴ Whatever the future eschatological orientation entertained by the Matthean community, it would have found that some of its members succumbed to, or at least were allured by, Gentile concerns.

3. The Validity of the Law for the Matthean Community and the Antinomism of the Gentiles

The harmony of the divine and the human will, as a religious idea, did not take deep root in Judaism for God's will was "not to be discerned gradually in the events of human life; it is revealed in the Law as the norm of all life and conduct; it is therefore not so much a matter of *willing* what God wills, but of *doing* what God wills and man should will. The goal set for man is not harmony, but obedience."²⁵ Hence for the Matthean Jewish Christian community, "Matthew *generally* emphasizes the abiding validity of the law and the prophets for the church."²⁶ But, what about the Gentiles who would receive the Gospel in Antioch? Probably, under the influence of their fellow Gentiles these Gentile Christians slowly emerged as a group that tried to undermine even the moderately accentuated validity of the Law by the Matthean community for the Gentiles. Or, it is also possible that Gentile Christians if they existed in these parts were already the inheritors of the Pauline view that they were not *hupo nomon*. However, G. Barth's study, "Matthew's Understanding of the Law", has isolated a group in Mt's gospel, which he calls antinomians, libertines or false prophets. This group took refuge in the idea that

²⁴ W. Carter, *Matthew and the Margins. A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading*, 42.

²⁵ E. Lohmeyer, *The Lord's Prayer*, London: William Collins Sons & Co., Ltd., 1965, 116.

²⁶ G. Bornkamm *et al.*, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, London: SCM Press Ltd., 1963, 163.

Christ had abolished the law. To uphold that unique understanding of the law by the Matthean community, Mt, while distancing himself from the rabbinate, also took the libertines to task.²⁷ Mt opposed the fundamental theological view point of these libertines, namely, that Christ has abolished the law, for by it they relied more on their *charismata*, their spiritual gifts, but not on their pistis. Hence, there is the exhortation in Mt to do God's will, to yield fruit, for these libertines or false prophets are recognized by their bad fruits (Mt 7:16-20), by lack of good works (Mt 7:21f) and they cause love to grow cold (Mt 24:12). Perhaps, these libertines are in Mt's mind when he threatens judgment in 25:31ff; 13:36ff; 16:27.²⁸ Therefore, when the disciples are cautioned about the way the Gentiles pray, the latter would, perhaps, include even the Gentile Christians. For Mt an over-anxiety about tomorrow or an exercise of libertine behavior that results in faith and love growing cold and an absence of good works could only come from subtle Gentile pressure. Therefore, the third petition came in not on account of Jewish parallels but because of Gentile Christian opposition to the law. That is, it became the Matthean liturgical community's answer to the Gentile Christian antinomism. This petition also helped in answering Gentile concerns of every day life, which were in fact a manifestation of an antinomial life. This means the petition in 6:10bc is in response to both 6:33 and 7:21. But how does the inclusion of the petition in 6:10bc help to address this antinomial situation?

a) *The Matthean community opens to Gentiles*

It would appear that the Matthean community for whom the Jewish law was still important circumvented its need for the Gentiles by speaking of God's will instead. This does not mean that Mt was completely doing away with the law for the Gentiles. But he was giving it a new bearing as far as they were concerned. Just as, "by using the love command to interpret the Law, Mt distanced himself from the rabbinate; by citing the love command as the essence of the Law, Mt took issue with the antinomians."²⁹ Mt opened his community

27 *Ibid.* G. Barth was a disciple of G. Bornkamm.

28 *Ibid.*, 163-164.

29 R.F. Collins, *Introduction to the New Testament*, New York: Image Books, 1987, 212.

to the Gentile mission by laying a stress on Jesus' priority of love over the ritual law. The Matthean church stood in conflict with Israel, that is, with its leaders (Mt 5:20; 21:23-23:39).³⁰ With this accent on love as being quite central to Old Testament law, he opened the way for the Gentiles to be both free of the Jewish law³¹ and under the will of God at the same time. Therefore, in taking issue with these Hellenistic antinomians, Mt needed to modify both the Greek notion of God's will and align it as much as possible with his own moderate conception of the Law.

b. Mt makes the meaning of obedience explicit in the Gethsemane story.

According to M. Dibelius, Mt formulates the petition in 6:10b under the influence of the Gethsemane story in Mt 26:36-42. But H.D. Betz argues that this story, which follows Mark closely, makes a reference to God's will twice, i.e., Mt 26:39, 42. The first, in Mt 26:39, is identical with Mk 14:36 but Mt 26:42: "...My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, thy will be done" has no basis in Markan *vorlage*. Jesus' prayer, the second time, that is, in 26:42, therefore, is Mt's way of making explicit its connection with the petition in the LP, a connection which would not have been obvious merely on the basis 26:39 and its comparison with Mark.³² That is, Jesus prays in Gethsemane just as he taught his disciples to do.

Jesus, in praying, 'your will be done,' not only asks that God do what he wants but at the same time he asks for the strength to subordinate himself actively to this will of God. Thus our petition aims at the active behavior of the person. But it is not a hidden imperative; instead, it lays the human action before God's feet

³⁰ U. Luz, *Studies in Matthew*, 372.

³¹ U. Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 87.

³² H.D. Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 393. U. Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 370 thinks that the fact we have the petition in the Didache should indicate that it shares a *vorlage* common to the liturgical Matthean community and is not necessarily dependent on the gospel of Mt. Whereas, W.D. Davies and D.C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 597, believe the Didache is dependent on the Gospel of Matthew.

in the shape of a petition. In the realm of Old Testament-Jewish thinking the will of the active God is always understood as the claim on an active partner. It is not surrender to an impermeable fate which is to be accepted simply in faith. It seems to me that an alternative between divine action and human action would be a false alternative.³³

c. The nuanced third petition and its implied restraint on Gentile laxity

The next point that concerns us is how Mt aligns the Greek notion of God's will with his own conception of the Jewish Law. The idea contained in Mt 6:10c, "as in heaven so on earth," was probably influenced by Ps 135:6: "whatever the Lord pleases he does, in heaven and on earth." The presence of this phrase in the Didache as we have it in the LP shows it goes back to a Matthean liturgical community *vorlage*.

If the petition in Mt 6:10bc, "Thy will be done as in heaven so on earth," was not originally a part of the LP, it is unlikely Mt would have used 6:10c, "as in heaven so on earth," to qualify all the three Thou petitions.³⁴ The Matthean intention is that the disciples do not come under the sway of a Gentile belief that Christ has abolished the law. The question of God's will, quite apart from the question of whether God will ensure that it would be done by humankind or whether humans are called to do it, is the one closest to the problem concerning the law faced by the Matthean church in its relation with the Gentiles. In fact, it would seem, the question of God's will is in reply to what the Gentiles are alleged to believe. The evangelist is giving voice to the concern of the Matthean community by saying that should the Gentiles

³³ U. Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 380.

³⁴ Following Schürmann, R.E. Brown, "The Pater Noster as an Eschatological Prayer," 194, note 80 thinks Mt 6:10c modifies only the third petition. But others view the verse as relating to all the three Thou petitions, for example, G.R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 152; F.D. Bruner, *Matthew – A Commentary*, 1.304. That would mean Mt 6:10c was inserted by the Matthean community precisely in order to broaden the frame of reference of all the first three petitions so as to explicitly include the earth as well.

do away with the Jewish law they would still be under the will of God, which need to be interpreted on earth as it is in heaven. It is God's will that all seek his kingdom and its righteousness and recognize the holiness of his name on earth in the present. Heaven is a reference point with regard to God's will but not with regard to God's name and his kingdom. This is because only the will of God can be done, whereas his name and his kingdom exist quite apart from our doing.³⁵

The petition, "Thy will be done as in heaven so on earth," has at least two nuances:

- a. *that* it is being done in heaven (= a fact) so may it be done on earth.
- b. *how* it is being done in heaven (= a quality) so may it be done on earth.

In Mt we believe both nuances are available. If the libertine behavior of the Gentiles tried to do away with the law, 6:10c: "as in heaven so on earth" is a reminder to the disciples, who are under Gentile influence, of the fact that God's will *is being done* in heaven and so they are obliged to do it on earth. That is, humanity is "the last outpost in the universe that still obstructs and defies God's intentions."³⁶ And, if the Matthean community laid great stress on Jesus' priority of love over ritual law, that would also be the manner how Mt would expect the Gentiles or Gentile Christians understand God's will. Doing it will enable them bear fruit. And fruit they must bear on earth. Whereas, Mt 5:20 invites from the disciples a higher righteousness than that of the scribes and Pharisees. This indicates a demand made of Jesus' disciples in relation to God's kingdom and his will. The higher righteousness demanded demonstrates *quality*. The 'heavens' is a reference standard for what needs to happen on earth,³⁷ both in

³⁵ Of course, one will say God's name is glorified, his kingdom is sought but even so it is not the same thing as when one is called to do God's will.

³⁶ H.D. Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 395.

³⁷ cf. BDF § 453.1. J. Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 288, n. 325 with regard to the use of *oēs...kai* gives three different possibilities of meaning. If heaven is taken to be a standard, then the construction *oēs...kai* would mean "as in heaven...so also on earth." See a similar construction in Acts 7:51.

terms of fact and quality. The thought that God's will is being done in heaven and being done splendidly is really what denotes the "not-yet" dimension of God's kingdom. Yet, God's actions in Jesus Christ and the human response reveal that "realized eschatology is in continuity with the future eschatology it foreshadows."³⁸ Perhaps against Gentile laxity, Mt is really saying here that "earth, the realm of humans, does not have autonomy independent of God's reign and will (5:13)."³⁹

Conclusion

The Matthean community primarily consisted of a small group of Jewish Christians who found themselves in the midst of Gentiles and some Gentile Christians at Antioch. This community was unique in the sense that it upheld the Old Testament law but interpreted it from the perspective of the love commandment which is clear from the SM and the call to forgiveness in the LP itself and in the rest of the Gospel. Mt became the spokesperson for this community and highlighted Jesus' command to love in a threefold interaction with his milieu. He chose to emphasize Jesus' priority of love by calling his gospel "the gospel of the kingdom". This gospel called forth righteousness from its hearers. And, it is in relation to the kingdom and its righteousness that the threefold summons becomes clear. First, in relation to the Jews, especially the scribes and the Pharisees, Mt invites the disciples to a higher righteousness for without it they would never enter the Kingdom of heaven (Mt 5:20). Second, in relation to a Gentile influence on his community, Mt calls on his disciples to first seek God's kingdom and his righteousness and that their daily needs would be met by God (Mt 6:33). Third, in relation to the antinomians who viewed life with a certain laxity, he cautions his community that just being charismatic and calling on the Lord alone without doing his will, would not merit them the kingdom of heaven (Mt 7:21).

Mt does not impose the Jewish law on the Gentile Christians at Antioch. But he argues that neither can they be without a law. Here it makes sense to speak of the third petition, "Thy will be done as in heaven so on earth," as Mt's way of meeting Christians, whether

³⁸ D.A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, WBC, Dallas: Word Books Publisher, 1993, 149.

³⁹ W. Carter, *Matthew and the Margins. A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading*, 166.

Gentile or only influenced by a Gentile way of thinking, more than halfway by clarifying the meaning of the law in terms of God's will, an idea they would be able to resonate with. Mt presents the third petition as something reasonable for God's will is being honored in the heavens.

Many scholars have discussed whether the third petition involves a human action or a divine action. In the light of the hope given to humankind in the New Testament, "Behold I make all things new", (Rev 21:5; cf. 2Cor 5:17) a new covenant is being unfolded, a covenant already foretold by Jeremiah 31:31-34. No longer is there a need for brother to teach brother to know the Lord for they shall all know me and I will forgive their sins. Such texts reveal God's control over humankind and history and show that his will, will always be accomplished for it is he who accomplishes it. Yet, as humans we have a responsibility for the life that has been given to us. We ask God to be in control but also ask for strength to subordinate ourselves to his will. That is precisely what Jesus prayed in the garden of Gethsemane. God being in control doesn't take away human struggle to know what he is about.

The Matthean church had to struggle with the reality of Gentiles and Gentile Christians. In response to that struggle, Mt has presented to the disciples that the saving will of God lies at the heart of the third petition.⁴⁰ We must remember that we ourselves are Gentile Christians who live today in the midst of a largely Gentile world. We are engulfed by varied concerns and the Matthean gospel presents us with a blueprint of how to approach such a world. In teaching us the LP, Mt tells us that it is to God that we must first look. It is his will that we must invite people to recognize if his kingdom is to arrive in our midst and if the petitions of second part of the LP are to be realized. Understanding God's will is the pivot around which the entire prayer is actualized. It's ours to proclaim to the Gentile world how God's will was perfectly done by Christ and what that merited for us, namely our salvation. But even if the Gentile world should seem uninterested in the 'how' of salvation, it cannot be denied that God's saving will remains intact in those who pray this petition. A Gentile will still be saved by it. That is God's universal will to save but the minority

⁴⁰ G.R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 151.

Matthean church still beckons, as it did then, both the disciples and the would be disciples (Mt 28:19f), by way of this petition, to seek God's kingdom and its demands.

Again, the third petition must be seen in relation to the Kingdom that Jesus came to inaugurate. Above, we asked whether the third petition involved a human or a divine action, here we ask, whether it is a single action or a process. That means do we wait for an eschatological happening at the end of time or must we see the ultimate future reality already breaking in? Surely, at the end Jesus will deliver the kingdom to God the Father after destroying all powers (1Cor 15:24) and we will see God's faithfulness but the present is not devoid of his action. The aorist *genēthēto* used in the petition denotes ultimate fulfillment of God's will as a single action but not in an apocalyptic sort of way. When the evil around us becomes overwhelming we are wont to think of the fulfillment of God's will in a sudden apocalyptic manner. But the Matthean gospel teaches us to resist the status quo of elitism, imperialism, militarism and materialism⁴¹ by the prophetic action that took place at Gethsemane when the cross replaced Jesus' preaching and miracles.⁴² That's where God's will was done ultimately. The church must emulate the love command by refusing to recognize the present situation of injustice in the world as normative. The Matthean insistence on righteousness shows that God's will has not happened and therefore his kingdom has not fully arrived. The LP exposes society's injustices and contradictions. We see the actuality of human structures and relationships trying to thwart the divine will in the present. So while we revive an eschatological yearning we cannot but become aware that the present is the decisive moment where a new vision of God's truth, justice and love must be born. Salvation and healing belong together just as theology and practice must go together. And this is possible because for Mt Jesus is always the Immanuel, God with us. For Mt grace is something concrete for Jesus is the face of God in the midst of this world. And, Jesus is presented by Mt as a model in life and action for us to bear our cross

41 W. Carter, *Matthew and the Margins. A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading*, 165.

42 G.T. Montague, *Companion God. A Cross-Cultural Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 90.

and hope for our resurrection.⁴³ Therefore, there can be no stoic resignation to fate, or an acceptance of fate as in the Hindu karma and hope to be reincarnated in a better life after this one. The LP is a revolutionary prayer and to say it from the heart is to commit ourselves to work to bring about God's will in the present⁴⁴ without denying his power to bring about his will when and how he chooses.

Today, as we live in a world of "ethical disorientation" and "anything goes" attitude of the postmodern society, the rites and ceremonies our churches provide are "hardly identity-forming." This is increasingly true of some countries of Western Europe.⁴⁵ But in the midst of an increasing secularization of society, even in a country like ours, the third petition invites us to a new centering, an alternative way of life. We cannot put too many commercials into our prayer and then still imagine we are doing God's will. As it bid the Matthean disciples to seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness, the third petition calls us likewise, and, then, promises us that God will take care of our needs. To put first things first is really what it means to trust in God's providential care and his love for us. And that is a present imperative.

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43 U. Luz, *Studies in Matthew*, 373-379.

44 G.T. Montague, *Companion God. A Cross-Cultural Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 90

45 U. Luz, *Studies in Matthew*, 374-375.

Bread for the Journey

L. Legrand

The author addresses the first of the "We" petitions in the Lord's Prayer. The question of praying for bread might seem a mundane reality but our Lord was concerned about it on our behalf. Straight away we become aware that this petition is not as simple as it might seem. The term, "Bread," brings to the fore many exegetical and hermeneutical questions, and, among these, the actual meaning of this simple word, bread, which has been rendered more difficult on account of the Greek adjective *epiousion* qualifying it. The exegetical options the author presents enable us to come to grips with the significance this petition should have for us today. The relationship between the material reality of bread and its spiritual significance belongs to the order of the sign. The sign has its own authenticity even as it points to a deeper reality.

Like the other parts of the Lord's Prayer, the request for "bread" raises a number of questions, both exegetical and hermeneutic, concerning both its exact meaning and its significance today. At the same time, in its own modest scale, like the rest of the Our Father in the words of Tertullian, this lowly petition is also, a *breviarium totius evangelii*, a digest of the entire Gospel.

Context

The order of priority given to human needs in the second part of the prayer may be surprising. Food comes first; forgiveness, rescue from temptation and all kind of evil come only afterwards. This priority given to food seems to give the prayer a down to earth atmosphere, limited to a narrow un-spiritual horizon. It hardly compares with the exalted stance of the Upanishads which expresses the yearning for light, truth and immortality. Such lofty perspectives do appear in the "High Priestly prayer" of Jesus in Jn 17 which evokes unity, sanctity, truth, divine belonging, love, knowledge, glory.

Actually this apparently unspiritual outlook of the Our Father is less superficial than it would seem. The Our Father limits the intentions to three: bread, forgiveness and temptation. The last one is general in purpose and refers to all the threats affecting the human condition. The other two, bread and forgiveness concern the basic needs of human life: food and love, food for the body and love for the heart. That the need for love is expressed in terms of forgiveness is quite realistic since, all too often, in the world of tension in which we live, forgiveness is the concrete form of love.

Lofty or not, the filial prayer to the Father is the expression of an experiential analysis of human needs. Without the material necessities of life, there is no human dignity: Gen 1 explains that the image and likeness of God in humanity is embraced and conditioned by whatever is good in heaven and on earth, made dependent on "everything that moves upon the earth and every green plant for food" (Gen 1:26.30). On the other hand, a heartless materialistic world exhales a stifling atmosphere. Love and concretely a capacity to forgive is the soul that gives the full liberative dimensions of the divine image and likeness.

The contents

a) Bread

In this context, the primary focus given to bread is to be taken seriously. But, before we consider the possible connotations of this request for bread, a question of hermeneutic and a thorny problem of translation are to be taken into account.

The focus on "bread" raises a hermeneutic problem in the many parts of the world where bread is not the basic food, but rice, millet, maize, taro, potato... or even seal meat, etc. We must give "bread" the symbolical significance it had in Mediterranean countries, that of typical image of human needs. Luther had a humorous comment in his *Catechism*:

What should we understand by 'daily bread'? Whatever pertains to food and upkeep of our body, food and drink, clothing, home and life style, fields, cattle, work, income and properties a devoted wife, good children, faithful and pious government officers, a good administration, favourable weather, good name, true friends, decent neighbours and all the like.¹

1 *Kleiner Katechismus, Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, xxx, 301. Quoting this comment, U. Luz disagrees: "This does not agree with the intention of

Then comes the tricky problem of translation. In both the texts of Mt and Lk, the "bread" we ask for is qualified by the Greek adjective *epiousion*. It is a "rare Greek word whose exact meaning and etymology remains disputed."² Depending on the etymology we presume, it can mean the bread for today,³ supernatural bread,⁴ bread for to-morrow.⁵ St Jerome himself, for all his learning, was confused and inconsistent: in the Gospels of Mt and Lk, he gave respectively the renderings *supersubstantialem* (supersubstantial) and *cotidianum* (daily). The Neo-Vulgate has kept the same ambiguity. Actually these various meanings make sense. We need daily food, and it is legitimate to ask God to give us the basic necessities of life as the children of Israel had done already in the desert (Ex 16:1-7). But "man does not live on bread alone" (Dt 8:3) and the basic necessities of life extend to the spiritual human needs, the supernatural gifts of the word of God (Dt 8:3), of God given wisdom (Prov 9:5). And, since the life to come is compared to a banquet (Lk 14:15), the bread we ask for is also the eschatological participation in this heavenly feast. Embracing all theses connotations of the theme of bread in the Bible is the application to the Eucharist, that goes back already to Jn 6.

In general commentators are reluctant to give a clear cut solution and consider that the various possible meanings

the text. The strong rooting of this petition in the situation of the poor makes us ask naturally how a socially secure inhabitant of an industrial nation can pray it. My answer: by making it into an 'alien' petition and identifying in it with the truly poor and their need rather than by expanding it to other needs in disagreement with the text" (U. Luz, *Matthew 1-7. A Commentary*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989, 383). Luz' comment is pertinent. However it remains within the perspectives of the comfortably settled Western academic world for which the poor are an 'alien' world.

- 2 B.Y. Viviano, "The Gospel according to Matthew," *NJBC*, 645.
- 3 A rare parallel example of the use of the word is found in a papyrus where it refers to the daily ration received by labourers.
- 4 Presuming that the adjective *epiousios* is made of *epi* (upon, above) and *ousia* (nature). But this ontological meaning of *ousia* belongs to the much later theological Christological debates. In the New Testament, the word *ousia* occurs only once in Lk 15:12.13 about the prodigal son who asks for his half of the family "possessions" and then squanders all his "possessions."
- 5 St. Jerome says that he read this rendering in a copy of the "Gospel to the Hebrews."

can be combined: 'the bread then is earthly bread, the bread of the poor and the needy, and, at the same time, because of the eschatological hour in which it is prayed and eaten, it is the future bread in this today, the bread of the elect and the blessed.'⁶

But, whatever may be the rich connotations of the prayer for bread, what is significant is that they stem from the humble reality of bread, the food of the poor. The basic evangelical symbol of God's bounty is not an abundance of silver and gold, or crown and sceptre, attributes of royal munificence authority. Neither is it a beautiful work of art, like a painting or a statue. It is not even the "shower of roses" promised by St Theresa of Lisieux. It is just plain daily food. Daily food is an important aspect of human existence and of the mission of Jesus and of the Church. It is true that wealth does not make one happy and that man does not live on bread alone. But it is equally true that there can be no happiness without the necessities of life and that it is impossible to go in spiritual pursuits when daily food is a problem. People living in sub-human conditions are also in a sub-Christian state.

Jesus lived in a poor family; he knew the importance of daily bread. He was not like the saints, whose stories we are told, for whom eating was a burden and who mixed ashes with their fare. A good part of Jesus' actions and teachings takes place in the context of meals: Cana, the banquets, the multiplication of the loaves. In contrast with John the Baptist he was even accused of being "a glutton and a drunkard" (Mt 11:19).⁷ He instituted the memorial of his presence in the context of a meal. It is not insignificant that he chose bread and wine to be the effective sign of his abiding presence and sacrifice. Theology has insisted that the bread and wine are really the body and blood of Christ. But we should not overlook the reverse facet that bread and wine have been chosen by him to carry the memorial of his saving action in the world.

In a biblical perspective, it is as important to stress the materiality of the "daily bread" which Jesus encourages to ask for as to perceive its trans-worldly implications.

For the Church also, the daily food of the world is an important aspect of her mission. The petition of the Lord's Prayer, the activity

6 B.Y. Viviano, "The Gospel according to Matthew," 645, quoting Lohmeyer.

7 Cf. E. La Verdière, *Dining in the Kingdom of God*, Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1994.

and teachings of Christ, the Eucharist justify the on-going concern of the Church for the welfare of humanity, for her social work and participation in the liberative struggles. It is all extensions of the multiplication of the loaves, of the Last Supper and of the Eucharist. The encyclical of Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* which refers to

the struggle to overcome everything which condemns (people) to remain on the margin of life: famine, chronic disease, illiteracy, poverty, injustices in international relations and especially in commercial exchanges, situations of economic and cultural neo-colonialism... This is not foreign to evangelization.⁸

Neither is it foreign to the prayer of the One who had compassion on the starving crowds (Mk 6:34) and fed them (Mk 6:35-42).

b) Our bread

The plural of the petition ("give us") and of the gift ("our bread") should be noticed. The prayer for bread is presented in a social context. Bread is not just food; it is meal, that is a social event. Anthropologically, the way of eating food is an important cultural factor, framed by a variety of rites, taboos, customs, in which a given community expresses and strengthens its identity. Biblically, sharing a common meal is a sign of covenant (Gen 26:26-31; 31:54; Ex 2:20; 24:9-11), an important aspect of the sacrificial rite particularly in the communion sacrifice (Lev 3; 7:11-21).⁹ Jesus institutes the memorial of his sacrifice and lets us share in the body and blood of the covenant as an anticipation of the banquet of the Kingdom (Mk 14:24-25 and par.). The Eucharist is not just food; it is shared meal, celebration of *agape* of mutual fellowship and belonging: "Because there is one bread, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the same bread" (1 Cor 10:17). In this connection, it is noteworthy that the first Eucharistic heresy, denounced already by Paul, did not concern the real presence but the failure to actualize genuine fellowship. It was the heresy of not sharing (1 Cor 11:17-22). The petition to give *us our* bread is thus an implied commitment to sharing.¹⁰

8 Cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 30.

9 Cf. J. Pedersen, *Israel. Its Life and Culture*, London: Cumberlege, 1926-1940, I. (1926) 305-6; II (1940), 334-338.

10 "Union with Christ is also union with all those to whom he gives himself... We can thus understand how *agape* also became a term for the Eucharist;

c) *Today/ every day/ for the age to come*

i. *bread for today*

The petition for the bread for today, one day at a time, recalls the way in which manna was given in the desert to the children of Israel: "I will now rain down bread from heaven for you. *Each day the people are to go out and gather their daily portion*" (Ex 16:4; cf. Num 11:7-8; Dt 8:4). There is no question of storing it for the morrow: the story goes on to say that, except for the Sabbath, if any one wanted to hoard it, it would become "wormy and rotten" (Ex 16:20).

The "bread from heaven" that God gave was thus a symbol of His loving care for his people (Ex 16:12). But it was also a "test to see whether they follow my precepts or not" (16:12). The interdiction to keep for the next day challenged them to rely on the divine love day by day. Any return to human reliance by way of possession amounted to lack of faith. The best comment is given by Jesus himself, later on in the Sermon on the Mount:

Do not worry about your life, what you will eat... Is not life more than food?... Look at the birds in the sky; they do not sow or reap, they gather nothing in their barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them... So do not worry and say: 'What are we to eat?' ... Your heavenly knows your needs. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be given you besides. Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself. Sufficient for a day is its own evil (Mt 6:25-34).

ii. *bread every day*

However, in his rendering of the Lord's Prayer, Luke thought of the extent of human life and of the hazards of history. So God's favour is now requested on a renewed daily basis ("give us every day") in the same way as the third evangelist had added the "daily" cross (Lk 9:23) to the text of Mk (8:34). The challenge of faith remains the same but it is now infused with a sense of duration. The prospect of parousia has now been dimmed. In the present period which is now

there God's own *agape* comes to us bodily in order to continue his work in us and through us... A Eucharist which does not pass over into the concrete practice of love is intrinsically mutilated" (Benedict XVI, *Encyclical Deus Caritas est*, 14).

stretching out, what is needed is day by day perseverance (8:15; 21:19) which needs day by day sustenance from the Lord.

iii. bread for the age to come

Then again manna evokes also the eschatological banquet (Rev 2:17). It is indeed the bread from heaven (Ps 78:24; 105:40; Wis 16:20; Jn 6:31). "Happy is the one who will eat bread in the kingdom of God" says one of the fellow guests of Jesus in Lk 14:15 (cf. Rev 19:9; Mt 8:11). The bread petition cannot but bring to mind the ultimate plenitude. This is particularly true if we understand the bread *epiousion* as "bread of to-morrow."¹¹ The petition of the Lord's Prayer and indeed the entire prayer is stretched between the "already-not yet" attitude of the believer in the present time. The present is important because it is the here and now of the divine presence. Creation has given present worldly realities the substance and value of the image and likeness of God. The Resurrection of Christ has raised earthly realities to the dignity of a New Creation: "Now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor 6:2). The Scriptures are fulfilled for those who receive the Good News (Lk 4:23). Yet, at the same time, "creation is still awaiting with eager expectation the revelation of the children of God... groaning, in labour pains, even until now... It is in hope that we have been saved" (Rom 8:19-24).

The Lord's Prayer is the expression of this "already-not yet" dialectic. It is at the same time act of faith in God's abiding presence with his people and act of hope in the fulfillment still to come.

Conclusion

"Give us today our daily bread." "Man does not live by bread alone." There seems to be a contradiction but the contradiction is only apparent.

The daily bread we ask for is certainly true, honest, tangible food. It is the bread of the tiller, of the reaper, of the miller, of the baker, "fruit of the earth and work of human hands," embodying and symbolizing the synergy of nature and culture. It is the food that meets the basic physical necessities of human existence. But in the biblical context, it represents also the response to the deeper hunger for the plenitude of life of the Kingdom.

11 Cf. note

Vice versa, when quoting Deut 8:3 in response to Satan, Jesus does not deny the necessity of food, he who fed the starving crowds, sat at banquets and was even accused of gluttony. Neither was the text of Deuteronomy an invitation to purely “spiritualistic” approach to life. It was rather an interpretation of the supply of fresh supplies which God had provided for His people: “He fed you with manna so that you may know that man does not live by bread alone.” Food was needed; people have to be nourished. But the food is gift of God and is to be understood as a perceptible sign of the divine love, a concrete pointer to the deeper dimensions of human life in the Covenant.

The relationship between the material reality and its spiritual significance is not antithetic. It belongs to the order of the sign. The sign has its own authenticity even as it points to a deeper reality. The Bible moves in an economy of Creation and Incarnation. The Created world is real. It is good. It has its own density. By Incarnation, the divine plenitude enters into the reality of the world and of humanity. The heavenly Father gets involved in the realities of food, bread; it identifies with the human hunger and shares in the sufferings and struggles of starving humanity.

Manna was the food for the journey of Israel from slavery to freedom. The bread for which we are praying for ourselves and for the world is the food needed to overcome the degrading poverty and starvation still prevailing in many parts of the world and many layers of human society. It is the divine sustenance needed to accompany and strengthen the toils and struggles of humanity’s journey towards true freedom and dignity. This pilgrimage of humanity towards a better world needs a soul and so the petition for bread is also a prayer for the bread of the Word. History has shown that the pilgrimage to human plenitude remains always unfinished. We believe that it reaches its final goal in the divine plenitude of the “new heaven and the new earth” (Rev 21:1) when “creation itself will be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God” (Rom 8:21). At the same time as it is a petition, the prayer for bread is also a commitment to join the pilgrimage of the hungry towards fulfillment in the strength of the God given food and of his Word.

Forgiveness the Key to a Reconciled Community

“And forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors” (Mt 6:12)

Jacob Theckanath

To pray for forgiveness is to receive and share forgiveness, both as sinners, and, so often, as the *sinned-against*. God's call to us is not only to be a forgiven community but also to be 'forgivers'. This is the dynamics to which the Good News invites us. This prayer is so much needed in a world marked by division as well as longing for unity, by violence as well as the desire for the healing of our fractured lives. Forgiveness and non-violence alone can usher in a new era of peace and harmony in our world.

“This is a time to heal the old wounds and build a new South Africa”¹ These words were uttered on 2nd May, 1994 by Nelson Mandela. He is a *maha atma* (great soul) who is still around us, walking our earth. Mandela said this in a speech soon after the near-landslide victory of his party in the historic, first ever democratic election in that country. In his autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom*, he writes, “... I saw my mission as one of preaching reconciliation, of binding the wounds of the country, of engendering trust and confidence.”² Coming as it is from someone who was greatly *sinned against*, it is a historic proclamation of the Gospel value contained in the fifth petition of the *Lord's Prayer*.

We live at a time when old wounds are constantly and vindictively evoked, and new wounds are being inflicted upon the human family in an endless chain of violence. This is because there are those who

1 N. Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom. The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*, London: Little, Brown and Co., 1994, 612.

2 *Ibid*.

are bent upon keeping the old wounds festering, and finding enemies. They cannot live without enemies. They cannot keep power without aggression on real or perceived enemies. Revenge and retaliation are seen as signs of power.

We are not only sinners, but we are also often *sinned-against*. We are called not only to be forgiven but also to be 'forgivers'. This is the dynamics to which the Good News calls us as we pray and live the fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer in a world marked by division as well as longing for unity, by violence as well as the desire for the healing of our fractured lives. Forgiveness and non-violence alone can usher in a new era of peace and harmony in our world.

Abba Experience as Foundation

The Lord's Prayer (LP), in its entirety, is grounded on the experience of God as *Abba*, which was at the core of Jesus' life and ministry. Every element in the prayer is intrinsically related to this surprisingly and radically new relationship with God, which we are invited to *share, pray and live*. It is not surprising that '*Abba*' appears seven times in Mt 6: 1-15 (vv.1,4,6,8, 9,14,15), within which we find the LP, and the last two of these verses are closely related to the petition under consideration. Mt constantly alerts us to fix our eyes on *Abba*; besides, vv. 14-15 highlight the special link this fifth petition has with the *Abba* experience.

What is new is that the prayer for forgiveness is now rooted in the experience of Jesus of God as *Abba*. This rooting is of great significance for praying and, above all, for *living* this petition. We might do well to recall that forgiveness of sins appears as a uniquely significant activity of Jesus in the Gospels. Jesus forgave sins. Jesus' table-fellowship "with tax collectors and sinners" is a radical expression of such ministry. In fact, in the first Gospel the call of Matthew, the tax collector is the context for Jesus' interpretation of his ministry in terms of sinners: "For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners" (Mt 9: 9-13). Jesus also knows that an accusation is levelled against him for being "a friend of tax collectors and sinners" (Mt 11:19; see Lk 7:34). In the narrative of the Last Supper we have these words that refer to Jesus' death as being linked to the forgiveness of sins: "...this is my blood ... poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Mt 26: 28). Jesus' death is the ultimate testament of God's forgiving love, a testament sealed with his blood.

Deus Caritas Est expresses it succinctly: "His [Jesus'] death on the cross is the culmination of that turning of God against himself in which he gives himself in order to raise man up and save him. This is love in its most radical form."³

a) "*Forgive us*"

These words of the fifth petition ring powerful in the light of the above. Just as the fourth evangelist says "God *is* love", we can say that 'God *is* forgiveness'. Forgiveness belongs to the very being of God in his relationship with humans. That is why the disciples are to pray: "Father, ... forgive us!"

We should keep in mind that forgiveness of sin is not something separate (though distinct in our perception and experience) from God's love. Love and forgiveness are inseparable. The very word forgiveness (and its equivalent in some other languages) indicates its inner dynamics in the experience of humans. Forgiveness is love already "given" in advance, even before we actually receive it. The word seems to be constructed with 'for' a diminutive of 'fore' (as in 'foreknowledge') and 'given' together with a nominal suffix 'ess', making 'for(e)-given-ess'.⁴ What is significant in this highly creative intuition of those who coined the word is that the object of the transitive verb give/n is unspoken since it is self-evident. What is given to us (and in turn to be given by us) is *love*, a love that is given even before we actually receive it.

Jesus expresses it so powerfully in a parabolic way when he describes the Prodigal Father as indulging in lavishing his extravagant love upon the sinful son with five verbs: "... his father 1) saw him 2) and was filled with compassion; 3) he ran and 4) and put his arms around and 5) kissed him" (Lk 15: 20). It is noteworthy that only after giving us these five actions of the Father that Jesus tells us that the younger son confessed to the Father. This is, to use the image of the poet Francis Thompson, *the Hound of Heaven* relentlessly seeks after his straying children. It is enough to re-turn (*shub* in Hebrew); the fore-given love awaits us. Acknowledgement of our sinfulness is

3 *Deus Caritas Est*, 12.

4 Even in the active form (fore-give-ness) it contains the same insight - that of giving love in advance.

an explicit sign of our return to the source of love from which we choose to move away.

It is not what we do that brings about God's forgiveness. God *is* forgiveness. The Church is the Sacrament that "visibilises" God's fore-given love. Our choices, our actions can only show forth the change that takes place in us. God's love is unconditional and God's forgiving love too is unconditional. That means, we do not merit it but, nevertheless, it has serious consequences on our choices and actions. The coin of the gift of forgiving love has another inseparable side: the task of sharing it with other humans.

b) "Our debts"

What is the meaning of debts in this petition? Generally scholars consider that the expression contains an 'Aramaism.' The Aramaic term *hōbâé* is translated into Greek as *opheilēmata*, that is, debts. According John P. Meier one of the famous examples "of Aramaism is found in Matthean version of the LP (Mt 6:12): 'Forgive us our debts (*opheilēmata*)'. Debt is not a usual image for sin or guilt in Hebrew or Greek, but the Aramaic noun for debt (*hōbâé*), is often used metaphorically in this sense."⁵

'Debt' in Aramaic is used in moral and monetary or commercial sense. The word 'debt' to describe sin against God is common in Jewish writings.⁶ Besides, granting of release of debts to others because of what God himself has done by way of such a release is found in Deut 15: 1-2. Because of this feature some consider Mt's version of this petition more literal than Lk's 'sins.' However, Lk uses the word 'debt' in the latter part of the prayer ("for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us" (Lk 11:4). The reality indicated by this word is that by our failure to be faithful to God, or obedient to God, we stand before God as *debtors*. The love God has given to us is not responded to faithfully.

c) As we have forgiven our debtors

i. The eschatological dimension

The eschatological thrust of Jesus' proclamation of the Reign of

5 J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew, Rethinking the Historical Jesus, Volume One: Roots of the Problem*, New York: Doubleday, 1991, 265.

6 D. J. Harrington, S.J., *The Gospel of Matthew*, Sacra Pagina, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991, 95.

God should be a lens for us to pray and live the LP, and especially the petition we are reflecting on here. The “you petitions,” especially the prayer for the coming of the Reign of God in the first part of the prayer should influence our perspective. As John P. Meier puts it, “Only a contorted exegesis can remove the element of future eschatology from Jesus’ proclamation, as mirrored in the only prayer he ever taught to his disciples.”⁷

In the first part of the prayer we pray that God may reveal himself and reign with power and glory as the Ruler of the whole world. It is in the light of such authentic hope for God’s final establishment of his rule over everything that we should understand the petition under consideration.⁸

As we are recipients of divine mercy, the task incumbent upon us is even more urgent and supremely decisive (see Mt 25: 31-46). Meier states that this part of the prayer has in view the fearful final judgment that God the King will hold on the last day. “It is most significant that Jesus makes the disciples’ forgiveness of others in the present the condition of God’s definitive forgiveness of them on the last day; again an element of realized eschatology peeks through the predominantly future perspective.”⁹

In the present time, as we await for the final fulfilment by praying “Thy kingdom come!” we need to engage in witnessing to it by being instruments and channels of God’s forgiving love. That can be done by showing forth to our brothers and sisters God’s own readiness to forgive.¹⁰ In fact, it is this constant readiness to forgive that becomes a clear sign of our own sincerity in seeking God’s forgiveness.¹¹ With a hardened heart that is turned to others we can not sincerely turn to God.

7 J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew, Rethinking the Historical Jesus, Volume Two: Mentor, Message and Miracle*, New York: Doubleday, 1994, 300.

8 R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel of Matthew* (trans. by Robert R. Barr), Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 2002, 66-69.

9 J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew, Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 2. 301.

10 D.R.A Hare, *Matthew*, Interpretation, Louisville: John Knox Press, 1993, 68-69.

11 R. H. Gundry, *Matthew, A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church Under Persecution*, Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1994, ²109.

In this part of the prayer we are dealing with the present reality, the actual situation of being sinned against. The challenge is still more powerful and serious from the perspective of the urgency of the coming of God's Reign. There are many situations that threaten the realization of the Reign of God. Unforgiving attitude is one such obstacle.

We are not only sinners; we are also often sinned against. This two-dimensional feature of our existential situation must be taken into consideration in our living this petition. What are we to do when we are sinned against? The transforming power of the Good News consists in the graced invitation to offer forgiveness to those who sin against us. Besides, others are also sinners and sinned against. The first thing needed is the realization that we are sharers in both good and evil, that *we belong* to a family where sinners and sinned against – all belong. This fundamental sense of belonging is necessary, for the prayer begins with *our* Abba!

Our concern in praying and living this petition ought to be about how can we as a *forgiven* community become a mutually *forgiving* community. It is in this context that the inter-relatedness of the *prayer* for bread, and the prayer for forgiveness lived in mutual forgiveness, must be seen. In fact, the two petitions are connected by “and.” The sharing in the bread of the Kingdom requires a community that seeks and shares forgiveness, a community that is truly reconciled not only with God, but also with one another. The NRSV translation has “as we have forgiven our debtors.” We might as well link this further to the instruction in the Sermon on the Mount: “So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave the gift..., first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift (Mt 5:21-26). We may find here an intimate connection between the forgiven and forgiving persons partaking in the bread of the Kingdom on the table of the Lord. The more important point in the light of this instruction is not whether I am O.K., whether my intentions are correct, whether my attitude is fine, but whether they “have something against” me. Mt places great emphasis on what the one who prays has to do (“you”, not what others have to do).

That may be the reason why Mt places such emphasis on this particular petition. It is the only petition in the LP that has an explanatory clause, with v. 14 confirming the challenge of v. 12 (6:14-15). Besides,

Mt formulates the demand positively and negatively so that the full implications of this petition may not be lost on his readers and the entire community of the disciples. As we turn to Abba for forgiveness, we need to turn to our brothers and sisters - a vision and attitude required for any process of mutual forgiveness and reconciliation. Praying and living are tightly held together by Mt. Praying and forgiving go together. This inseparable connection between mutual forgiveness and prayer in general (18:15-35) go together in our prayer of communion with God.

Ecumenical Challenge

This prayer also has an ecumenical challenge. The centuries-old division calls for reciprocal forgiveness and reconciliation. For all Christians pray this petition when they pray the LP. If a particular Christian community prays this prayer without mutual forgiveness extended to other communities, we have a prayer without the living of it. The sincerity of our prayer for forgiveness can only be shown by openness and acceptance of one another in the plurality of Churches and Christian denominations. This requires conversion on the part of all. During the Jubilee Year preparation this concern was expressed as follows: "The mediation of the words of the Our Father is capable, therefore, of increasing our ecumenical zeal....Conversion and forgiveness are the fulcrum of the biblical concept of the Jubilee and find their application in the purification of our historical memory which ensures that Christians are ready to forgive one another and to be reconciled...."¹²

Conclusion

By way of conclusion let me readdress the obvious and link two final challenges with the foregoing reflections.

a) Holistic view of spirituality

During the preparation for the Jubilee Year of Reconciliation in 1983, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India stated that 'while

12 From the Letter of Ecumenical Commission of the Vatican's Central Commission for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 issued to All National Committees of the Bishops Conferences, dated 30th July, 1998. The letter also proposes a practical suggestion that we should work towards a single Ecumenical translation of the L

every sin is personal there is no such thing as private sin. Every sin, by its very nature, is social.' In praying the fifth petition it is necessary for us to be acutely aware of the social dimension of sin, which most often is made into an individualistic reality. Such a view is not in tune with the Biblical understanding and practice. Retrieving the personal and interpersonal, communitarian and societal, structural and cosmic dimensions of our life, particularly of sin and forgiveness is a much needed transformation of consciousness in our times. Only by bringing these various levels into our spirituality – personal and collective - can we be ever faithful to the spirit of the LP, the only prayer Jesus taught us.

b) Praying for forgiveness, and truth and justice

In the light of the above reflections a question may arise: should we sacrifice truth and justice at the altar of forgiveness? We can and we should confront untruth and injustice, and we need to confront the offender. But it is for the sole purpose of establishing the truth which needs to be acknowledged. The truth should lead to reconciliation.

With that attitude of forgiveness on the part of the one offended and the offender, we can move towards the next stage: the establishment of justice. What kind of justice? Some adopt the strategy of punitive justice. Others opt for retributive or tit-for-tat 'justice'. Neither of these is a strategy for the children of *Abba*. For both these paths can only engender a cycle of violence, viciously affecting both the victim and the victimizer. Both will be caught up in the never-ending spiral of violence which we witness again in our history. We have another choice: to seek restorative justice, a justice that will contribute to the restoration of broken relationships, where truth and justice will form constitutive elements of a community of brothers and sisters, recognising equality of dignity.

Non-violent resistance to untruth and injustice is legitimate. But even here forgiveness of the sinner by the sinned against is necessary. Otherwise it is doomed to be a failure. Retaliation and reconciliation, violence and forgiveness cannot go together.

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In the Security of God, the Protector and Deliverer: Challenges from the Final Petitions of the Lord's Prayer

Augustine Mulloor

The author presents us here with the meaning of the final petitions of the Lord's Prayer which concern "Temptation" and "Evil/Evil One." The daily experiences of life cannot be separated from the final and eschatological tribulations. It is clear that these petitions are not requests placed before God so that he may act; rather they are confessions of faith of a believer that God become his ultimate basis of protection and salvation, and, therefore, they turn out to be an expression of one's willingness to take the corresponding practical attitudes in life. In the light of this, the author makes an urgent plea to Christians that they opt *for* authentic religiosity by making an unequivocal and uncompromising option *against* the false gods, which are being proposed daily as the means to salvation and deliverance.

Introduction

"The Lord's Prayer" (LP) is an inexhaustible source of challenges to Christian existence because it is the sum total of all that a Christian is supposed to be and to do. It is the perfect synthesis of Christian revelation and Christian demands. It is the summary of the new righteousness to be realized by the "true Israel".

This study is about the challenges emerging from the two final petitions of LP about "temptation" and "evil." The "true Israel", that is called to live in the security of God who is the only protector and deliverer, has to opt against the terribly attractive offers of securities, protections and deliverance offered by the world of today. What does this mean?

This enquiry is divided in the following way. After identifying the "temptation and evil" in today's society as the point of departure, we shall locate the two final petitions in the context of LP as a confession

of faith of the "new and true Israel". This will be followed by the interpretation of both petitions. Finally the impulses for praxis will be identified.

1. Temptation Today: The Point of Departure

Before we go to the analysis of the text, it is necessary that we be aware of the temptation that we face today. The kind of protection and security that we must seek from God has attained new dimensions in the present situation of the world and society.

Today money seems to hold great power over many.¹ The all-embracing concern of so many in life is "security" and "protection". And, unfortunately money has become the basis of our security. It seems to control our base desires and promotes violence. Money makes competitors of each other. So many want to reach the top and often do so by surrendering their human dignity altogether. Moral principles are thrown by the wayside. Again money has been linked to professionalism. That is, more money is possible only when one is professionally excellent and technically perfect. Hence, relationships and fidelity have been pushed to a subordinate position for the sake of professionalism and success. Efficiency and success are considered the basis for security of life. People want to better their careers rather than enter into relationships.

The three-dimensional security that is traditionally catalogued as fundamental, namely sustenance, protection and prosperity, has been re-visualized totally by the new circumstances. Thus the sustenance-security is essentially linked today to pleasure and food; protection-self-sufficiency which is realized through violence or muscle power is necessarily related to the development of science and technology; and prosperity which is assured by money cannot be dissociated from name, fame, prestige and status.

A close observation of the actual situation reveals that protection and security are sought primarily outside, while within, the persons seem to appear more and more insecure and unprotected. Articulated simply, it means that people do not depend on God any more. God does not appear to be a source of confidence. Even when religion is professed, one does not necessarily express religiosity or faith in God

1 Cf. A. Toffler, *The Power Shift*, New York, 1991.

or dependence on God's power. Very often in a hypocritical way it masks many selfish purposes. Often religion itself becomes a commercial product of transactions motivated by profit. This is a religiosity that is self-centred than God-centred and hence it leads only to a false and superficial security coming from self-fulfillment than self-transcendence. Further, the scientific and technological developments give human beings an exaggerated false confidence that "everything is possible" and an unreal feeling of surety or self-sufficiency, so that God gets often replaced with many other substitutes which are purely worldly. So much so, that for many, God becomes an irrelevant proposition or a delusion of the mind.

These are modern temptations that are experienced on a daily basis in the here and now, but which nevertheless have radical eschatological consequences and effects so that we must pray "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

2. The Lord's Prayer: The Confession of Faith

The LP has been always treated as a collection of petitions to God divided, on the basis of their linguistic form, into "you-petitions" and "we-petitions." If the LP is the synthesis of the teaching and person of Jesus, it is surely more than just a petitionary prayer. When interpreted from the perspective of the image of God implied and revealed in the LP, one can see that it is more a confession of faith: It is the credo of Christian discipleship that has crystallized the fundamental content of the Christian confession of faith, we may say, which has taken the place of the Jewish "Shema-Israel", "to be upon the heart, to be taught diligently to the children, to be talked about while sitting in the house, walking by the way, lying down or rising" (Deut 6:4-7).

Departing from the traditional view, when we look at this text as a "credo," the central concern is the image of God emerging from it. The whole prayer in a nutshell is the revelation of God from various aspects. Thus we have here the image of God, the Father, the king, provider, forgiver, protector and deliverer. Then, the petitions are not requests for particular gifts, but profession of faith in God who is proclaimed in all the above-said images and expression of the acceptance of responsibility to live with the demanded and required attitudes of life corresponding to each image: Father, familiarity and

intimacy combined with respect and fear; king, identification with his plan and project and obedience in the radical sense; provider, dependence on him and gratitude for the provisions; forgiver, humble acceptance of God's compassion as the very basis of existence and of our being reconciliatory and forgiving in our attitude to each other; protector, freedom from anxieties and trust in the providential care and security; and, finally, deliverer, loving surrender to the judge who saves definitively by overcoming "evil".

Image of God	Responsibility	Attitudes
Father	Glorify God through life Keep God as the only God	Intimacy Respect Fear
King	Work for the realization of his Plan. Make decisions accordingly	Obedience Sacrificial attitude
Provider	Work hard but depend on God	Not to be anxious about food, clothing
Forgiver	Open oneself to God's forgiveness	Forgive and be loving
Protector	Accept God as the sufficiency, security and source of strength	Do not replace God with money, name, fame and power, the temptations of the world
Deliverer (Judge)	Decide and opt always for the God centeredness, through love.	Be convinced and clearly reject "evil"

In the table we can see how the LP is centered on the various aspects of the image of God revealed in Jesus Christ and which are the corresponding responsibilities of the believer and his/her attitudes required by the commitment to this God and his vision. This leads us to the relationship between the LP and "the new righteousness" that is to be lived by the new community.

3. The Lord's Prayer and the New Righteousness

As confession of faith of the disciples of Jesus, the LP is the

synthesis of the new righteousness to be lived by the new covenant community.² According to Matthean theological vision, Christian Community is the new and true Israel that is elected by God in the place of the old Israel that became unfaithful.³ The new Israel has a new relationship with God through Jesus. The Church is the porter of the compassion of Jesus to the people (Mt 9:35-10:1). The relationship is based on the fatherhood of God through which the disciples of Jesus belong to the household of God, the family of God. They are challenged to live the new righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees which was exterior, ritualistic, ceremonial and often hypocritical (Mt 5:17-20). Jesus wanted the disciples to have a justice rooted in the heart which alone could bring about a transformation which empowered them to behave and act as children in the family of God in fulfillment of a new covenant already prophesied by Jer 31: 31f, according to which the law is written in the heart.

The righteousness to be lived by the new covenant community is summarized in the Sermon on the Mount (SM) (Mt 5:1-7:28).⁴ Within the SM, the LP is placed by Matthew at its very centre,⁵ thus revealing it as the essence to be lived by the new Israel. The LP is presented in the central section of the Sermon that deals with three fundamental expressions of religion; fasting, prayer and almsgiving. Further, framing the LP, before and after, we have new laws in the antitheses and the new attitudes in the teachings on judging, anxiety and serving two masters.

The new righteousness consists of the new attitudes or religiosity based on the acceptance of God as Father, King, provider, forgiver,

2 Cf. W.D. Davies and D.C. Allison Jr., *The Gospel according to St. Matthew*, 3 Vols., Edinburgh, 1988, 1,599-600.

3 Cf. W. Trilling, *Das Wah*

4 H.D. Betz, *Essays on the Sermon on the Mount*, Philadelphia, 1987, 14-15. He classifies the Sermon on the Mount as Epitome analogous to *Kyriai Doxai* of Epicurus. But he maintains, "There are substantial differences in form between the *Kyriai Doxai* and Matt 5-7." Here, see his *The Sermon on the Mount*, Hermeneia, Minneapolis, 1995, 73. A. Mulloor, *Jesus' Prayer of Praise*, N. Delhi, 1996, 277.

5 Cf. U. Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, I. (Mt 1-7), Zürich, 1985.

protector and judge. It is in this wider context that we shall analyze the last two petitions of the LP concerning "temptation" and "evil".

4. God is the Protector

The believer who is in intimate familial relationship with God as the "Father" and in deep respect and godly fear as the transcendent God dwelling "in heaven" lives identifying himself with the vision and dream which the sovereign God has for humanity. Such a believer obeys Him in every decision of life in union with His will, and recognizes Him as the ultimate provider of everything, and, hence, without any anxiety of life, lives and promotes communion with all and himself experiencing Him as the generous and unconditional forgiver, professes him as "the protector" when he prays, "lead us not into temptation".

Mē eisenegkēs hēmas eis peirasmon should be translated as "cause us not to succumb to temptation" as the verb reflects the Hebrew causative. The negative (*mē*) qualifies the idea of entry. So it would be wrong to translate it thus: "do not cause us to succumb to temptation," for God is not the active agent behind *peirasmōs* as statements such as in Jas 1:13: "God tempts no one" and 1Cor 10:13, make it clear.⁶

In the Jewish evening prayer, there is a similar petition: "Lead my foot not into the power of sin. And bring me not into the power of iniquity and not into the power of temptation and not into the power of something shameful".⁷ What is reported as a non-canonical saying which Jesus said in the evening, prior to prayer in Gethsemane, is also similar: "No one can obtain the kingdom of heaven, who has not passed through temptation."⁸ In all these what is implied is not preservation *from* temptation, but *in* temptation.⁹ The prayer asks God to let us

6 Cf. W.D. Davies and D.C. Allison Jr., *The Gospel according to St. Matthew*, 613; I.H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, Exeter, 1978, 461; Cf. also 4Q Flor 1:8.

7 b. Ber 60 f. Cf. J. Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*, London, 1967, 105; I. Abrahams, *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels*, New York, 1967, 98-99.

8 Cf. J. Jeremias, *Unknown Sayings of Jesus*, London, 1964, 73f.

9 Cf. W. Schneider, "Tempt, Test, Approve", in *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Exeter, 1978, 3. 803.

not fall victim to the danger of sin.¹⁰ So the word *peirasmōs* (from *peirazō*) is taken to mean “test”, that is, testing for determining the inner quality of a person and not as enticement to sin.¹¹ God tests people but does not entice them to sin (Jam 1:13). The Christians are urged to resist temptation (Gal 6:1) and to avoid situations in which temptation can be stronger than one can bear (Mt 26:41; Lk 22:40-46). This testing (Hebr. *nāsāh*) has a covenantal background. It refers “primarily to testing of the partner in the covenant to see whether he is keeping his side of the agreement”.¹² So it is a proof of faithfulness and authenticity.¹³ God thus carries out his saving purposes. The prayer implies that God would not withdraw his hand from the lives of the disciples so as to preserve them from the temptations of ungodly powers.¹⁴

Does “temptation” refer to the daily temptations of life or to the eschatological affliction? The prayer has the perspective of one involved in the redemptive drama. Here the daily experiences of life cannot be separated from the final and eschatological tribulations. The experiences of little temptations and testing of everyday life foreshadows the final testing and persecution, involving pseudo prophets, false saints and saviours, when not merely moral integrity but faith itself will be in danger in terms of apostasy.¹⁵ “The ultimate coming of God’s rule cannot be separated from the present fight against the kingdom of the tempter. Everyday temptations (Lk 8:13) as well as eschatological tribulations and temptations to go astray (Mk 13, 22; Rev 2,10) which will come upon all the inhabitants of the earth

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- 10 Cf. W. Trilling, *The Gospel according to Matthew for Spiritual Reading*, London, 1978, 115.
- 11 The Hebrew words *bāhan* (Mal 3, 10-15); *nāsāh* (Piel) Gen 22,1; Ex 17, 2. 7, and *massā* (Deut 4, 34; 7, 19; 29, 3; Ps 95, 8) are relevant.
- 12 Cf. W. Schneider, “Tempt, Test, Approve”, 799.
- 13 Cf. D.A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, Dallas, 1993, 151.
- 14 Cf. H. Seesemann, “*Peira... Peirao... Peirazo*”, in G. Kittel (ed.), *TDNT*, 6.31.
- 15 J. Jeremias interprets temptations only in relation to final temptations. Cf. his *Prayers of Jesus*, 105. Whereas U. Luz opts for the temptations of daily life alone, cf. *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*; W.D. Davies and D.C. Allison Jr., *The Gospel according to St. Matthew*, 1. 613-614, find both levels of temptations implied here.

(Rev 3,10) are summed up in this prayer”¹⁶ “A general application of the sixth petition to all afflictions would necessarily include the final affliction. And more to the point: Jesus and the Church after him – including Matthew – interpreted their present in terms of the ‘messianic woes’ (Mt 10: 34-36 = Lk 12:51-53; Mt 11:12-13 = Lk 16:16; Mk 10:38-39; 13:5-13; Lk 12:49-50; Rom 8:18; 1 Cor 7:26; Col 1:24; 2 Thess 2:7; Rev 7:9-17). For them, therefore, every individual test or trial would inevitably be conceived as belonging to the eschatological drama.¹⁷ So it is a request for help now, in view of the future crisis of apostasy.¹⁸

The prayer confesses that only God’s power can save the disciples. It reflects a confidence in the sovereign love of God that will preserve them in the testing of faith now and in the future tribulations and assumes God’s omnipotence and providential care. It is the expression of the covenantal fidelity of single-minded devotion to God as the single and only central reality of life. The commitment to God is lived exclusively by total and undivided dependence on him as the Psalmist voices it: “I lift up my eyes to the hills. From whence does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved, he who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade on your right hand. The sun shall not smite you by day nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from evil; The Lord will keep your life; The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and for evermore” (Ps 121). It crystallizes the experience of a believer that the Lord is the guard of the city and when he is on guard, everything will be safe and secure: “unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain” (Ps 127:1). It is a life “in the shelter of the Most High and in the shadow of the Almighty, covered by his pinions, finding

16 W. Schneider, “Tempt, Test, Approve”, 803.

17 W.D. Davies and D.C. Allison Jr., *The Gospel according to St. Matthew*, I.613-614.

18 The absence of a definite article (*ton*) with *peirasmon* is not decisive as many Greek words are definite from the nature of the case itself. But the *aorist* verb and the eschatological orientation, in general, of the Lord’s Prayer points to a specific occasion with openness to the present experiences which anticipate the future.

refuge under his wings, his faithfulness being the buckler and shield....” (Ps 91:1-6). There is a convincing assurance from God: “Because he cleaves to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him for he knows my name. When he calls to me I will answer him, I will be with him in trouble, I will rescue him and honor him” (Ps 91: 14-15). For such a person, the experience of God is that of a shepherd leading to green pastures and restful waters and preparing banquet in the presence of the disciples (Ps 23:1f). With this trustful relationship with God, the everlasting creator of heaven and earth, they renew their strength and mount up with wings like eagles and are never faint or exhausted (Is 40: 27-31).

Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount about the futility of anxiety and the need to be devoted to the one master (Mt 6:24-34) are practical attitudes that emerge from the sixth petition. A disciple must be anxious and concerned about the kingdom of God and God the Father will take care of his needs. The theocentric dimension of human existence which is the core of everything else is emphasized here.¹⁹ It is the expression of faith in the critical situations of life: stormy sea (Mt 8:23-27; Mt 14: 28-33); anxiety over food and clothing (Mt 6:25-34); lack of bread (16:5-12). In the language of Peter it means: “throw your anxieties on him for he cares about you” (1 Pet 5:7). In the Johannine language it is: “Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God; believe also in me” (Jn 14:1) and “... In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (Jn 16: 33).

So the wise and authentic disciple knows that the only way to avoid falling into sin is to follow where God leads and to be dependent upon him and his protection,²⁰ as Jesus did in his temptations (Mt 4:1-11).²¹

5. God is the Deliverer

The adversative particle *alla* (“but”) begins the last petition and is

19 Cf. A. Mulloor, “Anxiety and the Kingdom (Lk 12: 22-31),” in F. Lentzeu-Deis (ed.), *Jesus in Exegetical Reflections and Community Experience*, N. Delhi, 1997, 125-149.

20 Cf. D.L. Bock, *Luke*, 2 Vols., Grand Rapids, 2003-2004, I.1056.

21 Cf. A. Mulloor, “Mt 4:1-11: An Indian Rereading” in: A. Thottakara (ed.), *Indian Interpretation of Bible*, Bangalore, 2000, 379-392.

so attached to the previous one so as to complement the theme. As we have interpreted temptation in Mt 6: 13a in both general terms as applicable to the present as well as in terms that denote an eschatological affliction,²² the evil referred to in the last petition, 6:13b, is the final and ultimate evil of losing salvation. This is the evil that ultimately causes us to reject God. And so Peter exhorts us to resist the devil prowling around like a roaring lion with the firmness of faith (1 Pet 5:8-9). The struggle between human beings and the forces of evil manifested in various forms of lawlessness and lovelessness will without doubt end in the victory of God, which, again, is already proleptically revealed in the resurrection of Jesus. So the petition is both an articulation of faith in the decisive triumph of God over the evil and the realization of the universal reign of God.

If the reference is to the image of God who is the deliverer or judge, naturally the responsibility of the believer is to live consciously as being under God's judgment, which, in real terms, means living the law of love in action in favor of the poor (Mt 25:31-46).

The expression *apo tou pon ērou* may be taken either as masculine or neuter. Accordingly, the translation may be rendered, "the evil one" or "evil". There is a rabbinic prayer which interprets evil in the personalized form: "May it be thy will O Lord, our God... to deliver us from...the destructive Accuser."²³ Matthew speaks of the "Evil one" in 13:19,38. So does Jn 17:15. The expression belongs to the vocabulary of the Church.²⁴ However, Hebrew and Aramaic usage does not seem to favor evil as a designation for Satan and to that degree a reference to evil in general is also possible (Lk 6:45; Rom 12:9; 1 Thess 5:22).²⁵

Christian life is, till the end, a struggle and combat. Paul constantly warns us about the heightened onslaughts of the devil at the end time (Eph 6:12). Christian commitment requires one to be ever vigilant in the present through faithfulness (Mt 24: 45-51), personally responsible

22 Cf. L.T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, Minnesota, 1991, 178.

23 W.D. Davies and D.C. Allison Jr., *The Gospel according to St. Matthew*, 1.614.

24 *Ibid.*, 614-615; Cf. also G.T. Montague, *Companion God. A Cross-Cultural Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, New York, 1990, 94.

25 Cf. L. Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, Cambridge

so as to have the oil in the lamp (Mt 25:1-13) and ever engaged in the risky employment of the given talents (Mt 25: 14-30). It is through the commitment of faith, active through love (Gal 5:6), in favor of the little ones that the son of man, the deliverer and judge appears everyday.

6. Challenges for Today

It is clear that these petitions are not requests placed before God so that he may act; rather they are confessions of faith of a believer that God become his ultimate basis of protection and salvation, and, therefore, they turn out to be an expression of one's willingness to take the corresponding practical attitudes in life.

We are challenged to express our dependence on God as the only God and the only centre of our lives through authentic faith in terms of personal commitment to him beyond the alluring securities provided by the world today.

It is necessary for Christians to discern clearly from among the abundantly attractive possessions presented by the world and the fascinating possibilities, what we really need and what can really help us so as to live a life of dependence on God, who alone is our ultimate fulfillment and security.

It is urgent for Christians to make an unequivocal and uncompromising option *against* the false gods which are being proposed daily as the means to salvation and deliverance and hence to make an option *for* authentic religiosity.

The prayer demands a life of dynamic hopefulness in terms of active love in favor of the poor in order to overcome the evil definitively with the help of God.

In sum, the prayer, "lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil," is an invitation to lead an authentic life of faith in personal commitment to the one and only God and to a life of hope in total orientation to him and a life of love, in active altruistic involvement. God is our protector and deliverer and so we have the guarantee of his providential and protecting care and the hope of a definitive participation in his reign already begun but which awaits eschatological consummation.